

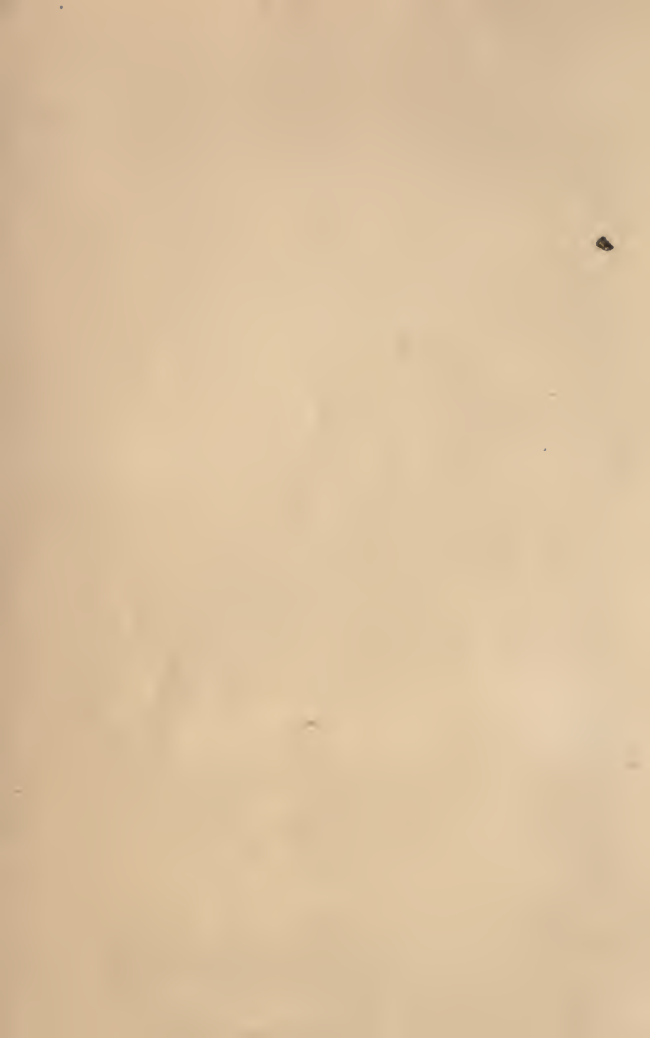
Flaxie
Frizzle
Stories





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BABY ETHEL GOES TO CHURCH. — Page 106.

Flaxie's
Kittyleen
Series



By
SOPHIE MAY
ILLUSTRATED

FLAXIE'S KITTYLEEN.

LEE & SHEPARD

BOSTON.



FLAXIE FRIZZLE STORIES

KITTYLEEN

BY

SOPHIE MAY

AUTHOR OF LITTLE PRUDY STORIES DOTTY DIMPLE STORIES
LITTLE PRUDY'S FLYAWAY STORIES ETC.

BOSTON

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PREFACE.

To Mothers :

This story — the fifth of the Flaxie Frizzle Series — deals less with the little child whose name it bears than with Flaxie Frizzle herself, Kittyleen being from first to last an interloper.

It aims to show the gradual improvement of Flaxie's character under the various disciplines of child-life and the sweet influence of a good and happy home.

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KITTYLEEN.

CHAPTER I.

KITTYLEEN.

A PRETTY brown and white dove was walking up the steep roof of Dr. Gray's house just as the door-bell rang. Perhaps she heard the bell, for she stopped and pecked her wings, then flew down to the ground, and looked up to see who was there.

It was Kittyleen. Kittyleen was a snip of a girl, three years old, whose long name was Katharine Garland. She looked like the dove, for she was brown and white all over: brown eyes and hair, brown cloak, white fur cap, and white tippet.

Her young nurse, Martha, had come with her, but there is not much to say here concerning Martha, except that she had the toothache. She did not intend to enter the house; she had only come to escort Kittyleen.

"I want to wing the bell myse'f," said Miss Kittyleen, standing on tiptoe, and bursting a button off one of her brown boots. But she could not reach the bell.

Just then the doctor's daughter, Mary Gray, opened the door, and seeing Kittyleen, threw both arms around her, exclaiming, —

"Oh, you darling, I'm so glad you've come!"

"Well, I'm afraid you'll be sorry enough by and by," said Martha, with a one-sided smile, that made her look like a squirrel with a nut in his cheek. "She's full of mischief, Kittyleen is, and her ma's painting china, and wanted her out of the way.

But if she's *too* much trouble, her ma wants you to send her right home."

"Oh, *she* won't trouble anybody. She and little Ethel will have a beautiful time together," said Mary, untying the child's white tippet.

Mary Gray, or Flaxie Frizzle, as people persisted in calling her sometimes, was nine years old, and had for some time felt a great care of Kittyleen. Everybody felt the care of Mrs. Garland's children. There were six of them, and their mother was always painting china. She did it beautifully, with graceful vines trailing over it, and golden butterflies ready to alight on sprays of lovely flowers. Sometimes the neighbors thought it would be a fine thing if she would keep her little ones at home rather more; but if she had done that she could not have painted china.

Flaxie took off Kittyleen's fur cap, and patted it softly, as she hung it on the hat-tree.

"That's my white pussy," remarked Kittyleen, eying it lovingly. "But it don't hurt; it has n't any feet."

"Well, good by, pet, don't get into mischief," said Martha, making another wry face as she tried to smile. And then, without one word to Flaxie as to the length of Kittyleen's visit, she hurried home to put a poultice on her face and help about the ironing; for, as she said to herself, "The work was only fun, now the three youngest children were out of the way."

Flaxie led Kittyleen into the back parlor to show her to the family. Little Ethel did not look particularly pleased, for she remembered that the baby-guest was very fond of sweetmeats, and sometimes snatched more

than her share. Mrs. Gray was embroidering a table-cover as a birthday present for Aunt Jane Abbott, and was feeling very much hurried; but she smiled and said to Flaxie, as she kissed the wee visitor, —

“So your little pet has come again? Well, we will do all we can to make her happy; but you know Julia and I are both busy over these presents, and you must take the chief care of Kittyleen yourself.”

“Yes ’m, you know I always do,” replied Flaxie; “and she behaves better with me than she does with her mother.”

Nobody thought of Kittyleen’s staying any longer than to dinner and supper; but there was never any certainty about the Garland children’s visits, especially when it began to storm. It began now at eleven o’clock, and snowed all day without ceasing; and then the wind rose, and blew the flakes

east and west and north and south, till the men in the streets could hardly keep their hats on their heads, much less hold an umbrella.

Of course Kittyleen could n't go home that night, for she lived on Prospect Street, half a mile away. Preston Gray said with a sarcastic smile that "it was a comfort to know that her mother would be easy about her."

But Kittyleen made a grieved lip. The sun had set, there were no stars in the sky, and the windows looked black and dismal. She parted the curtains and peeped out.

"All dark out there," said she, sadly. "Did God forget about the moon? I are goin' to cry! yes, Flaxie, I are; I want to see my mamma, and I are goin' to cry."

Two tiny tears gathered in the dove-like brown eyes, ready to fall. Dr. Gray rose

from his chair and paced the floor. He never could bear to see a little girl cry.

"I wonder," said he, — "I do wonder where Mary keeps that beautiful big wax doll!"

"O papa!" said Flaxie, clasping her hands, "*don't*, papa!"

"The wax doll is in my cabinet," replied Mrs. Gray, not regarding her daughter's distress; "and if Kittyleen won't cry she shall see it to-morrow."

"O mamma, please don't," repeated Flaxie.

But Kittyleen was happy from that moment. She *wanted* to stay now. She liked Flaxie's chamber, with its fine pictures and soft carpet, and the silk quilt upon the bed. She liked Flaxie's "nightie," with its pretty edging, and laughed because it had a "long end to it," long enough to wrap up her little pink toes.

Ethel, who was still younger than Kittyleen, had gone to bed long ago; but Kittyleen was too full of frolic, and when she went at last she would not lie still, but kept springing up and turning somersets all over the bed, lisping, as she caught her breath, "See dolly in the mornin'! me velly much obliged!"

"There, there, hush, Kittyleen," said Flaxie, crossly, "I want to go to sleep."

"Wish I had dolly here now; want to luf her *this* way," continued the little prattler, smoothing Flaxie's cheek with her tiny hand.

"No, no, you must n't love *my* doll in that way; it is n't the way to love dolls. You must n't touch her at all; you must n't go anywhere near her, Kittyleen Garland," exclaimed Flaxie, growing alarmed.

She had more treasures of value, perhaps, than any other little girl in Rosewood, and

was always afraid of their being injured. Indeed, she was too anxiously careful of some of them, and it was partly for this reason that her mother had promised to show Kittyleen the wax doll. Of all Flaxie's possessions this was the very chief, and she loved the pretty image with as much of a mother's love as a little girl is able to feel, always calling her "my only child" in forgetfulness of all her other dolls, black, white, and gray. The "Princess Aurora Arozarena," as she was called, was as large as a live baby six months old. Flaxie had owned her for two years, keeping her mostly in close confinement in her mother's cabinet, and never allowing little sister Ethel anything more than a tantalizing glimpse of her majesty's lustrous robes. This august being was dressed in fine silk, with gloves and sash to match, and always when she mounted the throne, and

sometimes when she didn't, she wore a crown upon her regal head. Her throne, I may add, was a round cricket, dotted with brass nails. You will see at once that it would be no light trial to have this adorable doll breathed upon by such a little gypsy as Kittyleen.

"O mamma," pleaded Flaxie next morning, "please hold her tight when you show"—and then, as Kittyleen skipped into the room she added, "Hold the w-a-x d-o-l-l tight when you show it!"

"*I* heard," said Kittyleen. "Diddle o-k-p-g! *I* heard!"

Mrs. Gray and Flaxie both laughed; but the terrible child added, dancing up and down, "See dolly *now*! me velly much obliged!" "Me velly much obliged" was her way of saying "if you please," and Flaxie often remarked upon it as "very cunning"; but she

saw nothing cunning in it now, and frowned severely as Mrs. Gray led the way up-stairs to her own chamber, unlocked the cabinet, and took out the much-desired, crowned, and glittering Aurora Arozarena.

“Kittyleen may look at it, but she is not to touch it. Ethel never has touched it. And when you hear the breakfast bell, Mary, you may put the doll back in the cabinet, and that will be the last of it; so try not to look so wretched.”

“Oh! oh! oh!” cried Kittyleen, too full of delight to do anything but scream. “Open eyes! shut eyes! Oh! oh! oh!”

She did not offer to touch the shining lady; and this grand exhibition *would* have been the last of it if Flaxie had not somehow, in her anxiety and haste, forgotten to turn the key on the royal prisoner when she put her back in the cabinet.

The storm was not over. The snow turned to rain and poured continually. Mrs. Garland had nearly time to paint a whole set of china; for of course Kittyleen could not go home that day.

In the afternoon the child, having quarrelled with little Ethel, strayed alone into Mrs. Gray's chamber. There on the great bracket against the wall stood that wonderful inlaid cabinet, pretty enough in itself to be gazed at and examined by curious little folks, even if there had been nothing inside. Kittyleen knew, however, that it contained the doll — Flaxie's doll — that was too sacred for little girls to touch. She could not have told afterwards why she did it, but she climbed on a chair and pulled at one of the doors of the cabinet. She certainly did not expect it would open, but to her intense delight it did open, and there in plain sight on a shelf lay the beautiful princess, fast asleep.

“Oh, my!” exclaimed Kittyleen in a perfect tremor of joy.

The princess lay there and smiled. You could almost see her breathe.

“Must n’t touch!” whispered Kittyleen to her meddling fingers.

Touch? Oh, no indeed!

But she swayed to and fro upon the chair and gazed. And evermore as she gazed, the longing grew upon her to know how much of Princess Arozarena was wax and how much was living flesh and blood. Had she teeth? a tongue? were there two holes in that pretty nose?

“I’ve got a nose, dolly, you’ve got a nose; everybody in this house has got a nose, two holes — way — in.”

Here she picked a pin out of her collar and flourished it over those waxen nostrils. If they were hollow —

Oh, she was n't going to hurt dolly! Not for anyfing in this world! But *would* the pin go in? That was all she wanted to know; and she never would know till she tried. "Why, it went in just as easy!" Such a tender, soft dolly!

Kittyleen admired her more than ever. "Some dollies are *so* hard!"

But why did this one lie with her eyes closed? She had slept long enough. "I fink her eyes are booful. Wake up, dolly." That was what Flaxie had said in the morning, and dolly had opened her bright eyes very wide. But she would n't open them now for Kittyleen. Kittyleen blew upon them; the lids would not stir.

"I fink it's funny! I fink it's velly funny," said baby, her breath coming short and fast. What *was* the way to get them open? They must be in there just the

same. Yes, they *must* be in there; but where?

She would n't hurt those dear eyes, oh, not for anyfing! But the longer they hid away from her the more she wanted to see them. What *were* they made of?

There was one way to get at the secret of their wondrous beauty. She could explore a little with the pin. Dolly wasn't alive; pins would n't hurt.

Gently! gently! Oh, yes, Kittyleen meant to be very gentle! But somehow that was a bad old pin! What made it bend right up? What did make it dig so and scratch?

I grieve to tell the rest. Princess Aro-zarena had been beautiful, but when she lost one eye she was horrid. Kittyleen caught her up in remorse, and the other eye flew open. Kittyleen screamed in fright.

It seemed as if the doll was alive, as if that eye was looking right at her.

It was too much to bear. Trembling, she opened the closet door, and threw the poor, scratched, miserable doll, with her one blazing eye, head-first into the clothes-bag.

CHAPTER II.

THE LITTLE WIDOW.

DID she go down-stairs then and tell anybody what she had done? That would have been the right way, but Kittyleen was only a baby. She felt sadly frightened, and roved all about the chambers crying, till Dora Whalen heard her from the back stairs, and took her down to the kitchen in her arms. "The poor little thing is homesick," thought Dora, and fed her with raisins.

When Flaxie went up to her mother's room soon afterward, she saw that the cabinet door was open and the doll gone, and was much troubled, though not prepared for

the worst. After long search, the mangled remains of the once blooming princess were brought to light, and then Flaxie's heart almost broke. She could not be comforted, and she could not forgive Kittyleen. It was of no use suggesting a new head for the poor, wounded doll. What was her mother thinking of? Didn't she know that Arozarena was just like a *person*? And who ever heard of a person's losing one head, and then going and having another fitted on? "She would n't be my own child with a new head and face; and you would n't talk of such a thing, mamma, if you'd ever lost a beautiful doll like this! You'd see the difference and know how I feel."

Phil and little Ethel looked on with solemn interest as their elder sister raved. So sad a day as this had not been known in the house since Preston's dear dog, Tantra Bo-



KITTYLEEN SCREAMED IN FRIGHT. — Page 21.



gus, ate poison by mistake and died. Princess Arozarena was almost like living flesh and blood to these little children. They could not remember the time when she did not exist, and it was really heartrending to think now of her dire and unexpected fate.

Mrs. Gray dropped her work and told the children of a sorrow she had known in her own early youth as grievous as this. She, too, had lost a bright, particular doll, and it had come to its end by the teeth of a neighbor's dog.

"Was it a mad dog?" asked Flaxie, with a sob. And Phil wondered if his mother could have cried.

"Indeed I cried."

"Why, you great, big, grown-up woman! Oh, but you were n't our mother then, *were* you? and you could n't have been if you'd tried, for we were n't born!"

Having settled this in his mind, Phil saw less absurdity in her crying over a doll.

"Naughty Kittyleen, pick folks' eyes out," exclaimed little Ethel, returning to the subject anew. "*Effel* would n't pick eyes out! No, in-deed!"

Never before had the baby felt herself so good and high-minded, so worthy of praise.

"*I* think Kittyleen ought to be shut up in the closet and whipped," declared Phil; and this opinion was so gratifying to Flaxie that she kissed him, and said she should never call him a naughty brother again.

"I suppose mother would n't shut her up because she is a visitor, but I *should* think she might send her home," muttered Flaxie, angrily.

"My daughter, would you have me send little Kittyleen home in the rain?"

"Yes 'm, I think she has stayed long

enough," sobbed Flaxie, pressing her hands in anguish to her bosom.

"But she is such a little thing, hardly more than a baby. I dare say she never dreamed of spoiling your doll. You can't think the child did it on purpose!"

"Of course she did! She's the queerest girl," cried Phil, "can't stay at home, can't let things alone. I think," pursued he, encouraged by the curling of Flaxie's lip, — "I think 't would be a good plan for Kitty-leen to go to Heaven! Folks don't want her down here!"

"Stop, my son, that will do! we will not talk any longer on this subject; but Mary, if you please, you may hold some worsted for me to wind."

Mrs. Gray hoped that a night's sleep would soothe her daughter's grief; but the little girl awoke next morning as sorrowful as

ever. Dark clouds were still lingering in the wintry sky, and clouds quite as heavy shut all the sunshine out of poor Flaxie's heart. She came down to breakfast weeping, a black scarf over her shoulders and a bow of black ribbon pinned at her throat. She had felt a melancholy desire to "go into mourning," and let the world know that death or worse than death had befallen her "only child."

"What does this mean?" asked Dr. Gray, who had quite forgotten yesterday's tragedy.

Phil spoke for her. He was getting into high favor with his sister by his zeal in espousing her cause.

"Flaxie's little girl is killed dead, and Flaxie is a *widow* now," said he.

Dr. Gray raised his coffee-cup to his lips to hide a smile. Kittyleen peeped up at the little "widow" with innocent curiosity, but

was frowned down severely, and began to cry. Her tears, however, were small and few. She could not possibly grieve much over her own naughtiness, committed so long ago as yesterday; but even if she had been as sorry as she ever knew how to be, the nice buckwheat cakes and syrup would have consoled her.

Mrs. Gray was pained to see that Flaxie still cherished bitter feeling against a child of that tender age

"My daughter," said she, after breakfast, "if Kittyleen were older and had tried wilfully to destroy your doll and make you unhappy, I should not blame you so much. But just see what a simple, unconscious little thing she is, hardly wiser than your kitten. Don't you feel really ashamed of being angry with her?"

"Yes, mamma, I do," replied Flaxie,

hanging her head. "But it is hard to forgive children sometimes, when they ought to be at home, you know, and not going 'round to other people's houses to make trouble!"

"Is Kittyleen at fault for going where her mother sends her? You are old enough, my daughter, to be more reasonable. Is this the way you are beginning to receive the discipline of your life?"

Flaxie knew what "discipline" meant. It was the name her mother gave to all troubles, both great and small, assuring Flaxie they are sent to us in love, to do us good, unless, alas, we receive them in a perverse spirit, and then they only make us worse.

"You *can* forgive Kittyleen, my child; God will help you; and until you do it you will have no peace; you will live in darkness and gloom. Go away by yourself for a while,

and when I see you again I hope there will be a little light in your soul."

About an hour afterward, Flaxie, with a beaming smile, came into the parlor where her sister Julia sat amusing Kittyleen. She had a plate of golden-brown cookies in her hand, baked in the form of stars, fishes, and elephants.

"Here's a star for you, all sugar and spice," said she very pleasantly to Kittyleen. "And I'll forgive you for scratching my doll all up and digging her eyes out. She's just ruined, did you know it? *Ruined!* And you're a bad little girl; *but I forgive you!*"

"Mary, my child, my child, is *that* what you meant to say?"

The grieved look on Mrs. Gray's face touched Flaxie's heart in a moment.

"No, mamma, it was n't what I meant at all. She is n't bad, and I did n't know I

was going to say that. I do forgive you, Kittyleen, really and truly. You never meant the least harm. Kiss me, darling! Flaxie loves you just the same, for you're only a baby and didn't know any better."

There was no "half-way work" about this. Kittyleen, perfectly willing to be forgiven, nestled up to Flaxie and laid her soft cheek against hers, murmuring, without meaning anything at all, —

"Me vely much obliged."

And at that moment the clouds broke away and the tardy sun came out. A ray of light shone over Mrs. Gray's face, — partly sunshine from the sky, and partly an inner sunshine from her happy heart. She was a good mother, and nothing gave her so much joy as to see her children rise above selfishness and sincerely strive to do right.

Kittyleen went home after dinner, loaded with toys. Flaxie was the one to fasten her cloak and tippet, and lead her by the hand to the front door; but not a word did she say to Martha about the "murder" of her waxen child. Not a word did any one say about it; and Mrs. Garland would never have heard of Kittyleen's mischief if the little one had not told of it herself.

Mr. Garland was quite disturbed, but his wife was too busy painting to pay much attention.

"My dear," said he, "Mary Gray is an uncommon little girl to bear what she does from Kittyleen. Suppose, as a reward for her patience, you send her a handsome present at Christmas."

"Very well," replied Mrs. Garland, serenely, "I'll send her a piece of the china I'm painting."

"No, no, she won't care anything about that. Buy her something really pretty," said Mr. Garland, who had no true love for the fine arts, and secretly wished his wife's paint-tubes and brushes were sunk in the sea.

"Oh, well, you may buy her something yourself! I don't want to bother my head about it," said Mrs. Garland, drawing a rim of gold around a teacup.

And Mr. Garland, who could get no help from his wife, was obliged to go to Mrs. Prim, a particular friend of the Gray family, and ask her what she thought Flaxie would like for a Christmas present.

CHAPTER III.

FLAXIE'S WILL.

"*A doll's piano!* Why, if there is anything in this world that I've always wanted, it's just this little piano! And oh, to think of Mr. Garland's giving it to me, when he could n't have known I wanted it! Did *you* tell him, Preston? And oh, *see* the keys! Hear me! There, that's the Grasshopper's Dance! Tinkle! tinkle! tinkle! Oh, *so* sweet! I could n't play it any better on my big piano, or half so well.

"Hush, Preston Gray, you need n't laugh! What if I *am* nine years old? Can't I like a little, cunning, beautiful doll's piano? And

what 's the harm, when you know I needed it to finish off the furniture in my dolls' parlor, and go with the chairs and sofas and tables and lamps and everything grand?

"This chair is just the thing for Princess Aurora Arozarena to sit in when she plays the piano. Now *would* you ever know any thing had happened to Aurora? Only her hair is a little darker, and her eyes are black instead of blue, and she hasn't *quite* the same kind of nose and mouth."

So Flaxie talked on and on; and the new treasure, the doll's piano, was kept for a long time in the back parlor in one of the alcoves, that people from far and near might hear and see it. The tiny white and black keys gave all the notes with a merry little tinkling sound that was enough to take a doll right off its feet and set it to dancing.

A wee chair was always before it, and in

the chair sat the princess, who had come to life again, and never knew she had been dead. Her happy young mother, Flaxie Frizzle, often knelt behind her, playing little jingling, squeaking tunes, exactly adapted to the ears of her royal highness, who would have played for herself if her long-wristed, light gloves had not been so exquisitely tight.

The piano was a great comfort in itself; and when Flaxie came to understand that it was a token of Mr. Garland's approval and gratitude, she valued it more than ever.

About this time she had a most uncomfortable siege of chicken-pox, and was obliged for two days to keep her room, looking sadly disfigured by the pink, puffy blotches which rose on her skin, and feeling very forlorn because her poor red eyes were too weak to admit of her reading.

“What does make me look so?” said she, almost crying, as she gazed at her face in the glass. “And, oh, Ninny, I feel a great deal worse than I look! I can tell you people wouldn’t laugh so much about chicken-pox if they knew how it feels!”

“Yes, dear, I’m sure it must be dreadful,” returned Ninny,—her real name was Julia,—with ready sympathy. “You woke me up ever, so many times last night screaming.”

“Screaming? Why, I did n’t know it! I must have been crazy!”

When ill, it was no unusual thing for the Gray children to be slightly delirious; and Flaxie often laughed over the droll speeches which she was reported to have made, but of which she herself could not recall a single word.

“What did I say last night when I was crazy?”

“You sat up in bed and cried for your ‘*little pinono*,’ — the doll’s piano, I suppose. And sometimes you seemed to think it had turned into a wolf, for you kept saying, ‘Why, what great, big teeth you’ve got! Oh, they’re to eat you the better, my dear!’”

Flaxie smiled faintly, and then, feeling very miserable, wiped away a tear, thinking, —

“Perhaps I am very, very ill. How do I know? Fannie Townsend never was crazy in her life, nor Blanche Jones. And what made doctor papa look at my tongue this morning, unless he thought I was growing worse? He gave me powders, too, and told me to stay up-stairs and keep warm. Maybe I’m going to have a fever. I didn’t eat anything for my breakfast but half a cracker, and my head aches so I don’t want any din-

ner. — Julia," said she, interrupting herself in the midst of these gloomy musings, "do people ever die of chicken-pox?"

"No, indeed, not that I ever heard of. What put that into your head?"

"Now, Julia, you don't know the least thing about it! What do *you* know about fevers and medicines and things like that? Just because your papa is a doctor, that's no reason you should shake your head and think there's nothing the matter with me, when I'm feeling so bad!"

Julia would not, on any account, have laughed at her poor little sister; so she slipped quietly out of the room before Flaxie had time to continue this train of absurd and amusing remarks.

Finding herself alone, however, the reflections of the chicken-pox patient grew more and more sombre. What *was* the dif-

ference between this and small-pox? She had heard of a red flag which was hoisted when that good clergyman, Mr. Branch, lay ill in a house away from everybody, and at last died, almost alone. Probably Doctor Papa would never send a little girl like her — his own daughter, too — to a house with a red flag! Still she might die; and if she did, Julia would naturally be very sorry she had spoken so lightly — not to say disrespectfully — of a disease whose miseries she had never felt; that is, the chicken-pox.

An hour or two afterwards, Mrs. Prim called at Flaxie's room, and after feeling her pulse, and saying, "Oh, *you* are not very ill," she turned to Grandma Gray, who had come in, and began a conversation with her about Blanche Jones's father.

"Yes," said Mrs. Prim, "Mr. Jones is really aware at last that his disease is con-

sumption. He knows he can never recover, and has made his will."

"Has he, indeed?" returned Grandma Gray. "I am truly glad to hear it."

"I tell my husband," went on Mrs. Prim, sitting very straight in her chair, — "I tell my husband I think it is every man's duty to make a will; yes, and every woman's duty, too. Mr. Prim agrees with me, and we each of us intend this very afternoon to have our wills drawn up and signed."

"A wise and proper thing, I am sure," remarked Grandma Gray.

"Grandma," asked Flaxie, as soon as their visitor had gone, "please tell me what's a-will, and why is it 'a wise and proper thing'?"

"Perhaps, little Mary, I cannot make you understand. But Mr. Prim has a great deal of money, and so has Mrs. Prim; and if either of them should die, perhaps it would

not be known what was best to do with the money that was left. So Mr. Prim is going to write his wishes about *his* money on a sheet of paper. He is going to say, 'I wish to give so many thousand dollars to my wife, and so many thousand dollars to somebody else,' etc. And Mrs. Prim will do the same about *her* money. She will say, 'I wish to give so many thousand dollars to Mr. Prim, and so many thousand dollars to somebody else,' etc."

"Well, if she wishes to give it, why does n't she do it, and not write about it?"

"Oh, she only means that she wishes it to be given away after she is dead! Not *now*, Mary!"

"Oh, yes'm, I understand, I understand now. Why, grandmamma, I've heard ever so often about people's making wills, but I never knew before what it meant."

In the afternoon, when Madam Gray had quite forgotten this conversation, she was startled by hearing Flaxie say plaintively, —

“Grandma, do little girls ever make wills?”

“Not that I ever heard of, my dear; but they certainly have a right to do so, if they like.”

“Well, if they have n’t a great deal of money, can they give away something besides money? I mean, have they a right to make a will and give away their books and toys and pretty things?”

“Oh, yes.”

“And is it ‘wise and proper’? You know,” added Flaxie, turning her aching head upon the pillow, — “you know I have a great many beautiful things, and if I ever die there is my sweet little new piano, and — and — I don’t expect I *shall* die, but if I ever do die, you know.”

Madam Gray understood her granddaughter's mood in a moment. Flaxie had a touch of 'melancholy.' Though very well aware that her disease was not of a dangerous nature, she liked to fancy that it was dangerous. Even now she had brought herself almost to the verge of tears, just by picturing to her own mind how sorry everybody would feel when she actually died of chicken-pox. Grandma Gray thought it might amuse and interest her to let her make a will, so she brought her a sheet of paper and a pencil, and instructed her as to the proper form of words to use.

Here is a copy of Flaxie's will : —

"I, Mary Gray, of Laurel Grove, N. Y., third child of Dr. Ephraim Gray, do hereby give and bequeath my personal property in the following manner : —

"*First.* I give and bequeath my pretty

doll's piano to Kittyleen Garland, whose real name is Katharine. I give it to her, because I was cross to her for scratching my doll's eyes out, and have been sorry for it ever since. To her heirs and assigns forever.

“*Second.* I give and bequeath my beautiful wax large doll with the new head to my dear little sister Ethel; but she must not play with it till she knows how to hold it without letting it fall. I give this to Ethel, her heirs and assigns forever.

“*Third.* My Bible and all my *nice* books, and my gold pen and handsome inkstand to my sister Julia, if she wants them.

“*Fourth.* The money in my box, — I don't know whether to give it to my father or mother or the missionaries.

“*Fifth.* I cannot think of anything more, and am willing my papa and mamma should

take care of the rest. Their heirs and assigns forever."

"Shall I say amen at the end?" asked Flaxie, who had become very much interested, and already felt decidedly better.

"Oh, no," replied her father, who had come in and was looking on with no little amusement; "only sign your name, and then your grandmother and Preston and I will add our names also, as witnesses. Then it will be a real will, my daughter, and will stand in court."

Flaxie did not know what he meant by "standing in court," but it sounded business-like and mysterious, and she took the pen her father offered her and signed her name with a feeling of great importance. Then Dr. Gray, grandma, and Preston added their names, and her father put four seals of red wax on the paper, and the whole thing

was finished, as she believed, "according to law."

After this, for the first time that day, she felt hungry ; and just as she was beginning to wonder if it was not nearly supper-time, her mother appeared with the tea-tray, on which were some slices of thin toast, a glass of ruby-colored jelly, and a goblet of milk. Flaxie's eyes brightened ; she felt that life was still worth living, and forgot to weave any more doleful fancies concerning the chicken-pox.

Next day she was well enough to go down-stairs ; and to add to the pleasure she felt in meeting the whole family together again, her father announced to her that as soon as the disfiguring blotches should be gone from her face, she might take a little journey to Hilltop to "regain her strength."

That was just like Doctor Papa. He was always giving his children happy surprises ; and it was really a blessing to belong to him, and even to be ill once in a while, for the sake of the compensation which he always managed should follow the illness.

CHAPTER IV.

CRACKERS AND CHEESE.

BUT there is always a drop of bitter in our sweetest cup. In Flaxie's cup just now were two bitter drops.

First, though she longed for the visit, she regretted to miss "dear, darling Miss Pike," who was coming from Hilltop next week. Still, as this excellent lady intended to spend the winter at Dr. Gray's as governess in his family, Flaxie's being gone at the very first of her stay did not really matter so much.

As for the second bitter drop, it seemed to Flaxie that if she could only take this

journey alone, with the sole care of her own self, her own ticket, and her own valise, she should be "perfectly happy." She was no longer so *very* young. Last summer she had seen a girl of her own age travelling alone, with a book, a parasol, and a paper of candy ; and the girl had carried her head so grandly, as if it had long been her habit to manage her own affairs, and she had looked withal so fascinating and distinguished, that Flaxie had often thought of her with envy. Why was *she* always considered so young and insignificant? What was lacking in *her* that she could not also travel alone?

"Why, Frizzle dear, you'd get switched off to Canada or something," said Preston. "I shall go with you to keep you on the right track." But Flaxie insisted.

"Why, I'm nine years old and three months and six days ; and it's only the least

bit of a ride to Hilltop, and I know every step of the way."

"You'd make a comical appearance travelling alone, now, would n't you?" returned Preston, who, though the dearest brother in the world, was becoming of late too much of a tease. He wore steel-bowed spectacles, and his eyes laughed through them sometimes with a dazzling, flashing light, which his little sister could not bear to meet. He thought she had too high an opinion of herself, and he "liked," as he expressed it, "to take her down."

"I am not sure, indeed, that Flaxie would not have been allowed by her parents to go to Hilltop alone if it had not been for this same desire of Preston's to "take her down."

Ah, well, there are greater trials in life than travelling with a dear elder brother, even if he does laugh at you once in a while.

But I must describe this journey, which you will see turned out, after all, rather differently from what Preston expected.

Flaxie packed her three favorite common dolls, Peppermint Drop, Dr. Smith, and Christie Gretchen, her box of water-colors, her charcoal and drawing-paper, all her games and part of her books; but was persuaded to take out some of these articles, in order to make room for her clothes. A valise will not hold everything, and clothes are needed, even for a two weeks' visit. Julia wove her sister's flaxen curls tightly together in one long braid, so that it might remain smooth during the journey, and Flaxie stood a long while before the hall mirror, pulling her hat this way and that, to make sure it was straight. In her excitement she had hardly stopped to eat any breakfast; but when the good-bys were all

over, and she was walking to the station with Preston, she suddenly recollected this, and complained to him that she was hungry.

"Well, that's a funny idea! I believe girls are always hungry," he responded.

Still the thought disturbed him. He never could bear to have anybody uncomfortable, and, of course, he would not allow his little sister to start on a journey fasting.

"See here, Flaxie, we have n't time now to go back for anything to eat ; but could n't you nibble a cracker, or a ginger-snap, or something?"

And he led her into a small grocery, where a man stood behind the counter selling a paper of cloves. There were no ginger-snaps to be had, but the man succeeded in finding some very dry, hard crackers at the bottom of a barrel. Flaxie did not want the crackers, but thought it might

be impolite to say so. Still less did she want the mouldy, crumbling cheese, which he produced from its hiding-place under a box. She looked on in silence while he cut off a pound of this and weighed it in a piece of brown paper.

“Take one of these crackers, Chicky, and put it in your pocket,” said Preston, in the kindest possible manner ; and Flaxie obeyed him, looking rather downcast. She wished she had not complained of needing food.

There were seventeen more crackers ; and these the grocer counted out, and put in a paper bag, scarcely large enough to hold them. He was a slow man, who walked with crutches ; and while he was debating whether to get a larger bag or to tie this one up with a string, a steam-whistle was heard, and the cars whizzed by the door.

Flaxie darted out in quick alarm.

"Oh, don't worry now, don't worry! I know what I'm about, *I* never get left," said Preston, in a reassuring tone. He would have liked it much better if Flaxie had relied entirely upon him. "They are going to stop at the station to take in freight. People will laugh at you if they see you run."

Nevertheless he was running, too; for even as he spoke he happened to remember that this train did not always stop for freight; and indeed it did not wait now five minutes. The children reached the station out of breath, and Preston had a scramble to buy tickets, check Flaxie's valise, and enter the cars with her before the train moved off. It was rather mortifying; but he did not allow himself to look in the least chagrined. He adjusted his spectacles, threw his head back a little, and gazed about him coolly, as if he



paticularly liked to be late, and would not on any account have come earlier.

“Why, if there is n’t Kittyleen!” said Flaxie.

But Kittyleen was only going to Rosewood, the next station. “Marfa” was with her, and would bring her back next day “if she was willing to come.”

Flaxie did not seat herself at once. She had a little chat with Kittyleen, after which I regret to say she stood on her tiptoes for some moments, gazing in the mirror at the farther end of the car.

“There, there, sit down, Chicky, your hat is all right,” said Preston, who considered her the prettiest little girl he knew, and felt that she did him credit. “And here are your check and your ticket. If you ever expect to travel alone you must learn to take care of your things.”

“Oh, yes, I know it! I always keep my ticket when I ride with papa; and very often he goes into another car and leaves me alone,” remarked Flaxie.

If this was meant as a hint, it was lost on Preston. He began to read a newspaper, while his young companion looked out of the window at the trees, houses, and fences that flew past in a dizzy blur. She thought she would count the trees, just to amuse herself, and had got as far as eighty-seven, when Preston suddenly tapped her on the shoulder. The conductor was standing near, waiting for her ticket. Rather bewildered, yet anxious to appear prompt and experienced, she put her hand hastily in her pocket, and drew forth, not her ticket, but that miserable, forgotten cracker.

The conductor, a good-natured, red-cheeked man, said, “No, I thank you,” and shook his sides with laughing.

Flaxie blushed painfully. Once she would not have minded it so very much, for she had been formerly a pert child ; but in growing older, she was growing more modest, sensitive, and retiring. She withdrew the cracker and produced the ticket, feeling with shame that she was behaving very unlike the elegant little girl who travelled with a book, a parasol, and a paper of candy.

But she was to suffer still more. The conductor had scarcely passed out of hearing when Preston said, in his wise, elder-brotherly tone, " Here, child, if this is the way you're going to behave, I might as well have that ticket myself ; your check, too. Oh, yes, and give me the key to your valise, and now your porte-monnaie. Would n't you like to have me take care of your handkerchief ? " He spoke half in jest, still it was quite too bad of him, for Flaxie was not a careless

child ; neither did she need "taking down," or at all events, she did not need it any more than Preston himself.

"I don't see what makes you think I'm such a baby. I'm only four years younger than you," she remonstrated, sighing heavily as she handed to him, one after another, the contents of her little cloak-pocket. He took them from her with a condescending smile.

"There, now, I feel easier," said he, settling himself comfortably ; "you'll have all *you* want to do to take care of the crackers and cheese. Why don't you eat them instead of offering them to the conductor? He has had his breakfast. Won't they laugh, though, at home, when I tell them about that?"

"Oh, Preston Gray, if you do tell about that!"

Flaxie had borne her trials thus far with patience, but now the tears started and she was battling to keep them back. Preston saw that he had gone too far, and though secretly wondering why it was that "girls can never take jokes," he resolved to make himself more agreeable during the rest of the journey.

CHAPTER V.

SPONGE-CAKE.

"THOSE crackers are n't very nice, that's a fact," said he, looking penitently at the overflowing paper bag, which stood upright on the seat between them.

"Not half as bad as the cheese," returned Flaxie.

"Well, I don't blame you for not liking mouldy cheese ; I don't like it myself," admitted Preston. "But I suppose, now, Chicky, if you had a piece of pie or a cake or a sandwich, you'd enjoy it, and feel more comfortable, would n't you?"

The gentle tone and manner touched his little sister, and called back her happiest smiles in a moment.

"Oh, I don't care the least bit about anything! I'm not very hungry, Preston; really I'm not."

"Yes, but I don't want you to be hungry at all," said the benevolent brother. "I want people that travel with me to feel all right and have a good time." Here he took out his purse and looked at the silver in it; there seemed to be plenty. "I wish a boy would come in with something besides popcorn and peanuts, and all that sort of nonsense, don't you? I'll tell you what I'll do," added he, returning the purse to his pocket. "I'll get out at Bremen and buy you a great square of sponge-cake."

"Oh, but Preston, you can't buy it there!"

"What's the reason I can't?"

"Because they don't keep it at Bremen. Sharon is the place; *Sharon*, near Hilltop."

"Where did you get your information?"

returned the lad, rather ruffled. "As often as I've travelled this road I think I ought to know that Bremen is a famous place for sponge-cake. There's an old woman living there that bakes it by the ton."

"Why, Preston Gray, that old woman lives at *Sharon*! I've seen her my own self. Don't you suppose I know? Why, Uncle Ben has bought sponge-cake of her ever so many times and brought it home to Aunt Charlotte."

One of Preston's dazzling smiles shone through his spectacles as he rejoined, —

"Oh, I dare say he has bought sponge-cake and carried it home to Aunt Charlotte; but that's no sign he has bought it at *Sharon*. You're mistaken, that's all. Now when you get to Bremen, and you see people stepping out of this car and coming back loaded with sponge-cake, perhaps you'll give up that I'm right."

Flaxie was ready to retort what she did not believe people *would* get out at Bremen, or if they did they would not find any cake. She was fond of having the last word, but remembering her blunder with the cracker, she said no more, and even thought meekly, —

“Oh, well, perhaps it *is* Bremen! I almost hope so, for I don’t want to wait till we get to Sharon.”

She had regained her spirits by this time, and found it very pleasant to be travelling with a kind brother like Preston, who had not a fault in the world except looking down upon her rather too much.

In a few minutes the train halted at Bremen, a small way-station. It did not look at all familiar to Preston. He had supposed Bremen was much larger, but that was probably because he had not been on this road for a whole year, and had forgotten some of

the stopping-places. The famous old cake-woman ; could it be that she lived here ? He had half a mind to ask the conductor ; but no ; Flaxie would hear him.

“ Oh, are you getting out ? ” said she.

To be sure he was. He was already hurrying down the aisle, too proud to confess that he could possibly have made a mistake.

He was just behind a woman with a baby in her arms, and had to wait for both the baby and the woman to be helped out. By the time he had got out himself, and before he had a moment to look around him, the cars were moving on again !

It was the most astonishing thing ! There he stood at the door of a wretched little wood-shed, close by the platform, swinging, his arms and crying, “ Stop ! stop ! ” But nobody heard except the baby and its mother, and nobody answered except the baby with

an "Argoo, argoo," out of its silly little throat. So this was Bremen! This woodshed and two or three houses!

It was a sad predicament for Preston, but a worse one for Flaxie. She, too, cried, "Stop! stop!" bounding up and down on the seat like an India-rubber ball. But the cars paid as little heed to her as they had paid to her brother. On they went, rattle, rattle, rattle. What cared they for a passenger overboard? What cared they for a passenger's sister left frantic and forlorn?

She would have appealed to the conductor, but he was in the next car. So was the brakeman, so was even the pop-corn boy.

The people went on talking and reading without minding her. They probably thought her a very restless child, for they had not seen her quiet that morning. So it was not till she began to wring her hands

and sob aloud that they suspected anything unusual had happened.

"What is the matter, little girl?" asked an old lady, leaning forward and offering her a paper of sassafras lozenges. Flaxie waved it away.

"Was it your brother that just left the car?" asked a kind old gentleman, suddenly recollecting the handsome lad in spectacles. "Did he get out on purpose?"

"Yes, sir, oh, yes, sir! on purpose to get me some cake! But he's lost over! Oh, dear, he's lost over! I can't make 'em stop."

"How far were you going, my child?"

"I don't *know* how far. I'm going to Hilltop to see Milly Allen. I don't *know* how far! Oh, dear, I did n't want any cake. I told him I was n't *very* hungry. I told him the old woman lived at *Sharon*. He did n't

believe what I said, and that's why he got left! Oh, dear, if he had n't got out!"

"It is n't safe to get out unless you know where you are going," said the old lady wisely; but the remark did not seem to be of any particular use just now. And then she put the sassafras lozenges back in her satchel. *They* did n't seem to be of any particular use, either.

"Oh, dear!" wailed Flaxie, "if I'd only travelled alone! I wanted to travel alone!"

The old gentleman did not quite understand. It seemed to him that she certainly *was* travelling alone, and if that was what she wanted she ought to be satisfied.

He folded his newspaper, put it in his hat, and came to sit down beside her. He was a better comforter than the old lady, for he had a dozen dear grandchildren at home, while she, poor soul, had only a tortoise-shell cat.

"I would n't shed another least drop of a tear," said the good old gentleman, hitting and upsetting the crackers, which tumbled out of the bag upon the floor. "Not one tear would I shed," said he, picking up the crackers. "Your brother will come on to Hilltop to-morrow, or maybe he can come this very afternoon; and then won't you both laugh about this? You'll ask him, 'Where's that cake?' And what do you suppose he'll answer to that?"

"Oh, I don't want the cake; *that* is n't what I want. My head aches and my throat aches, and I've just had the chicken-pox; and — and — oh, dear, I wish I was at home!"

"Where is your home, my little girl?"

"My home is at Laurel Grove, near Rosewood."

"And what is your name and your father's name?"

"He is Dr. Gray, and I am Mary Frances Gray."

"Ah, indeed! Why, I know your father very well," said the cheery old gentleman. "Will you shake hands? There, now, we're good friends, are n't we? And I'm going to Hilltop and beyond. I'm Dr. White, — tell your papa, — *old* Dr. White. Let's see, have you any ticket?"

Flaxie uttered a cry of despair. Till that moment she had not realized the full extent of her woes.

"Oh, Preston took my ticket, and my money, and *all* my things! Oh, *should* you have thought he would?"

"Ah, well; we'll see what we can do," said Dr. White.

"Oh, when I get to Hilltop I can't open my valise, for where's my check? I mean my key! Oh, if I'd travelled alone! Pres-

ton wanted to take care of me ; but he's taken care of me *too much !* ”

Dr. White found it hard to keep his face properly sober ; yet he knew his little friend would consider a smile very ill-timed.

“ I've been to Hilltop more than ever he has, for Milly Allen is just my age ; and I could have gone alone *beautifully*. He has bothered me so. But he didn't mean to bother me,” added she, ashamed to complain of him before a stranger. “ Only — ” Here she sprang up suddenly, and those miserable crackers rolled out again, followed by the cheese, — “ only I ought to have a ticket, you know. Do conductors ever let you travel without your ticket ? ” asked she, raising her brimming eyes anxiously to her new friend's face.

“ It depends upon circumstances, Miss Mary. This conductor will do it, I'll be bound.”

“Will he? Oh, I’m so glad!” said Flaxie, greatly relieved, though rather surprised. Why should this conductor let *her* go free? He had never seen her before, and knew nothing about her except that she carried crackers in her pocket. He appeared presently, smiling and holding out his hand; but after Dr. White had said something to him in a low tone, he patted Flaxie’s head with an “All right. Don’t lose your luncheon, my dear,” and passed on to the next seat.

“Did you tell him how my brother got lost over? Did you tell him everything?” asked Flaxie, looking quite gay and excited.

“Yes, almost everything. And now your troubles are over, Miss Mary, for he will give your name to the new conductor, and then when we get to Hilltop I can put you in a hack that will take you right to your uncle’s door.”

"Oh, no, sir, I don't want any hack! Uncle Ben will be there, waiting for me, with a sleigh, and Cousin Freddy, too. They always come to the depot with a sleigh, except in the summer, and then they come with a carryall or a wagon."

And, in truth, on arriving at Hilltop, the first persons to be seen were Uncle Ben Allen, his son Freddy, and, best of all, his daughter Milly, Flaxie's darling "twin cousin."

"But where 's Preston?" asked Freddy.

"He stopped at a wood shed on the way, to buy a piece of sponge-cake," replied Dr. White, shaking hands with Uncle Ben, as Freddy tucked Flaxie into the sleigh.

CHAPTER VI.

A NEW FRIEND.

PRESTON lingered at the wood-shed and about the tiny station of Bremen all that morning and most of the afternoon. It was a very solitary place, and he had ample time for reflection.

“Well, this is one way to take care of your little sister! Anybody’d think I was five years old! I can’t stand it to be such a fool! “Oh ho! I thought ’t was great fun, did n’t I, to make her give up her money and tickets? I wanted to ‘take her down,’ but now I’m taken down myself, and how do I like it?”

To judge by his clouded face and the stamping he made with his heels, he did not like it at all. “Poor little Flaxie, I know

she's rushing round that car and crying! What will she do with herself? *She* won't get off anywhere? Oh, no, *Flaxie* isn't such a goose as to get off a car unless there's some sense in it! There's only one goose in the family, and that's Preston Gray. No, *she* won't get off. And let's see, the conductor will remember her, on account of that cracker. He'll know she did have a ticket, so of course he'll let her go free. *She*'ll do well enough. She'll make friends on the cars; she's always making friends, she's so pretty and sweet."

In this way, by praising his sister and scolding himself, Preston tried to find a little consolation as he strode up and down the narrow sleigh-track — which the people of Bremen called a road. What he ought to do he could not decide.

After a while a man came along the road,

dragging a pail of flour on a sled. "Do you know how far it is to Hilltop, sir?" asked Preston, feeling himself very young and small, for the man stared at him as if *he* considered him a mere baby, and thought of taking him up pickaback.

"Hilltop, did you ask? Why, where are your folks? Where did you come from, travelling round here alone?"

"Oh, I came from Laurel Grove, just the other side of Rosewood," replied Preston, as dignified as a boy *can* be who feels himself crushed to the earth by unmerited contempt. "I got off the cars a few minutes ago, and — and — thought I'd wait for the next train. When does the next train go?"

"Well, it beats me to guess what you got off the cars for!" said this very disrespectful man, setting one foot on the sled and eying Preston all over. "You had n't ought to get

off the cars, sonny, it ain't safe; children get their necks broke that way."

"Can you tell me how far it is to Hilltop?" asked Preston, with an increase of dignity.

"Well, it's a good fifty miles or more, and you can't go till five o'clock this afternoon. You'd better speak to the folks that live in that red house yonder, and ask 'em to see you safe on board the cars, and when you once get on, you stick there! Don't you get off this side of Hilltop. Now mind, little shaver!" And with this very cutting advice and another disrespectful stare, the man toiled on with his sled and the pail of flour.

"I hope he was impolite enough," thought Preston, indignantly. He did not relish being looked down upon. Neither had Flaxie relished it, you remember. "So I can't get to Hilltop till evening. A pretty piece of work! They'll be just rising from

the supper-table, Flaxie and all; and won't they have a jolly time laughing at me? They'll ask what I came for at that time of day? Freddy'll call me a caterpillar and a snail, and everything else he can think of. No, *sir*, you don't catch me going to Hilltop to be laughed at! All I went for in the first place was to take care of Flaxie. No fun in it now. No use, either! Guess I'll go home. But what shall I do with the check and the purse and the key? Oh, Flaxie, I wish I'd let you alone."

While he was lamenting in this strain, he became conscious of a pair of sorrowful eyes raised to his face. They were the eyes of a thin and unhappy-looking but handsome black and white spaniel. It was a tender, respectful gaze; and to a boy who has just felt himself looked down upon, it is consoling to be looked up to, even by a dog.

“ Here, Rover, Rover, good fellow ! Here, Rover,” said he, softly patting the shaggy head.

There was a magical charm for all animals in Preston’s touch ; and this poor creature crouched before him with a mournful, loving whine, got in front of him as he moved about, sat down at his feet and licked his boots when he stood still, and behaved altogether as if he had found a dear friend.

“ I can’t think what you mean, Rover. There, that’s your name, I know by the way you wag your tail ! But, Rover, you never saw *me* before. What makes you think you know me ? ”

The handsome animal whined again at the sound of Preston’s voice, pushing his nose into the boy’s hand, and going off into a sort of dog-ecstasy. It was really quite touching. All the more so as there was something in

the curl of his tail, the droop of his ears, that suggested to Preston his own lost dog, the beloved and ever-lamented Tantra Bogus.

"Tantra Bogus was larger and sleeker and fatter, but he had the same white spot in his forehead and his eyes were the same color," said Preston, his heart stirred with tender memories, as he stooped and laid his cheek lovingly against the rough black face.

"Ah, Rover, you do love me ! But I can't see why ! I guessed your name, and I'll warrant I can guess who your master is, too. It's that impudent man with the sled. Because, sir, you've been half starved, and he's just the man to starve a dog."

There was a crunching sound in the snow, and Preston looked up, half expecting to see the "impudent man" again ; but this time it was a lady. Certainly they had strange people in Bremen, for this lady was the ugli-

est being he had ever seen. Large, half-open lips, big red nose, small red eyes. But he did not forget to raise his cap respectfully.

"Dear old Rover, I'm glad he's found a friend at last," said the lady to Preston, in the sweetest tones. "He lost his master three weeks ago, and mourns him so much that it is very pitiful. He won't stay in the house with his master's family, but lingers about this shed day and night."

"Poor fellow, poor fellow," said Preston; and the dog capered about him, going out of his head again with rapture.

"Yes," said the lady, setting down a little bundle in the snow, and weaving the silver pin more securely into her shawl, "you are the very first person Rover has cared for, or taken the least notice of. The family are afraid he will starve to death. There, now!

I have an idea! But perhaps you are in a hurry?" added she, with a particularly sweet smile. It was surprising how an ugly mouth like hers could smile so agreeably.

"No, ma'am, no hurry. I've got to wait seven hours. Going to — going to —"

Here Preston's words were lost in an indistinct muttering, his mouth being pretty close to Rover's nose.

"Then if you'll wait here a few minutes I'll bring Rover something to eat. They'll all be so glad; and perhaps he'll take it from *you*, though he won't from any one else."

Observe, she did not address Preston as "sonny," or call him a "shaver." She did not even say "my boy" or "my child" or "my dear," or ask him any embarrassing questions.

He was convinced that she was a perfect lady, and answered briskly, —

“Oh, do bring him a piece of meat, ma'am !
You see I can wait, for I'm going to —”

But not knowing whether to say Hilltop or Laurel Grove, he prudently left the sentence unfinished.

The lady hastened to the red house near by, and Preston, still caressing the dog, watched her as she returned with a light step, bearing a plate of meat in her hand. There was something very interesting about her homeliness ; he could not help looking at her face, and the more he looked the better he liked it.

“This is nice roast beef, a real Thanksgiving dinner, Rover,” said she, with loving good-will. “Do eat it and make me happy.”

As if he were grateful, and really anxious to please her, this dog, who had so long refused his food, thrust his nose immediately into the heaped-up plate before him and

began to eat. If Preston moved away, however, he stopped, turned about, and followed him uneasily.

"It is very plain that the charm lies in you," said the lady, smiling, as Preston patted Rover's head, and he began to eat again.

It had been dreadful, she said, to see him pining away, and to hear him moaning day and night. Mrs. Danforth, his master's widow, could hardly bear it, and her son, who lived with her, had declared that Rover must be taken out of town and given to a new master or he would surely die of grief.

"Now look here, ma'am," cried Preston, looking up with sudden animation, "why could n't he go home with me? I've lost my dog. Why could n't he go home with me and be *my* dog, you know?"

"I don't see why not, if you would like

him. I know Mr. Danforth would be glad to give him up to a boy so kind as you are. Where do you live?"

"At Laurel Grove, ma'am." And feeling a growing desire to stand well in the lady's esteem, he tried to explain the situation.

"But I—perhaps I sha'n't go home—that is, not to-day. I didn't know what I *should* do. I stopped here on the way. I had n't decided, you know," said he, vaguely.

The lady looked at him in some surprise. Perhaps she doubted whether he could be trusted with a dog. But she did not say anything like that. "Do you live at Laurel Grove? Why, that is just where *I* am going. I came from Hilltop yesterday to visit the Danforths on my way, and I'm going to Laurel Grove to-day, to Dr. Gray's."

"Why, Dr. Gray is my father! And now I know who *you* are. You're Miss Pike! I

might have known it was you," he went on, thinking aloud, "for you look just as I expected you would."

He could not dream how this little speech hurt Miss Pike. She had moved forward to shake hands with him, but at his last words her cheeks flushed and she drew back again. Was she thinking that very likely he had heard her called "that homely Miss Pike"?

But the next moment she smiled pleasantly, holding out her hand.

"And now I know who *you* are. You're Master Preston Gray. 'I might have known it was you, for you look just as I expected you would!'"

"Oh, Flaxie told you I wore spectacles, *didn't* she?" Preston was somewhat sensitive about those. "I have to wear them, for if I take them off I'm blind almost," said he by way of apology.

"Yes, I know, you dear blessed boy! Your sister has told me, and all the Allen family have told me, too, how patient you've been. I'm so glad I've met you, Master Preston. And now what shall I say to your father when I shall see him to-day?"

The boy looked up, and then he looked down. "Oh, are you going to see my father to-day?"

"Yes, I shall start at three o'clock this afternoon in the baggage-car. I'm told there's no passenger-car, and I must go as baggage, or wait till six o'clock to-morrow morning, and I don't like to start so early as that, should you?"

"No, ma'am, I should n't; it's pretty dark at six. Look here, Miss Pike, if I take Rover I shall have to take him in the baggage car, sha'n't I?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

“Well, I’ve a good mind to take him to-day, if Mr. Danforth will let me. I don’t want to go to Hilltop now ; it is n’t very convenient.”

“Ah?” said Miss Pike.

“I did n’t care much about going to Hilltop anyway, not now ; I only came to take care of my little sister.”

“Ah?” said Miss Pike again, with an upward slide to her voice.

“Oh, I suppose you think I did n’t take care of her very well. I suppose you think it’s sort of queer my being here, but you see —”

Here he struggled so long with something in his throat that she helped him by saying, —

“Oh, possibly you got left.”

What a bright, far-seeing woman she was !

“Yes, ma’am, I did get left. That was

just how it was. If it had not been for trying to get some sponge-cake —

“Well, I’m glad you stopped here,” broke in the delightful Miss Pike, who seemed to care nothing at all about the little particulars. So good of her *not* to care! “I’m glad I met you. And as your little sister will not need you any more, could n’t you go home this afternoon to be company for me? — Why, just see, Rover has eaten every bit of his dinner!”

“Oh, I’d like to go with you, ma’am if I had n’t carried off Flaxie’s check and key,” demurred Preston. “You see, I took them to keep them safe.”

Rather too safe, Miss Pike thought; but she said, without the shadow of a smile, “Why not send the key and check to your sister by mail?”

CHAPTER VII.

THAT HOMELY MISS PIKE.

AND so it was settled. Preston dined at the red house; and Mr. Danforth, who turned out to be a very different person from the man with the sled, was glad enough to give up Rover to a gentle, well-bred little boy, who would be sure to treat him kindly.

"I never saw you before," said Mr. Danforth, "but I know your father very well; and I am not afraid to trust my dog to the care of Dr. Gray's son."

Accordingly, Miss Pike and Preston and Rover had a very cosey ride home that afternoon in the baggage-car. So very cosey it

was and so social, with nobody to disturb them but the baggage-master occasionally coming in and going out, that Preston almost laid his heart bare before the kindly Miss Pike. He told her how dreadful it was to have your eyes cut with sharp instruments; how tedious it was to recite Latin to Mr. Garland; how fine it would be to leave off study and become a gentleman farmer, with the chance of receiving silver prizes for sheep and poultry.

She listened with motherly sympathy, and he was tempted to go still further, and relate the history of all his sisters and his little brother. It might amuse her to hear Flaxie's great composition, entitled "Domestic Animals," the one she wrote last fall, that had been so freely laughed at by everybody far and near. He knew it by heart, every single word of it; but just as he was about

to say, "Oh, Miss Pike, would you like to hear what a funny composition Flaxie wrote last fall?" a sudden thought checked him.

Was this a kind thing to do? The composition was very foolish, certainly, but his little sister had long ago grown thoroughly ashamed of it, though very proud of it at first.

"It would cut her up dreadfully to have Miss Pike hear it. So what's the use? I'm sure I don't like to have Flaxie make fun of *me*," thought he. He had been greatly humbled to-day, and nothing makes us so tender of others as suffering keenly ourselves.

Miss Pike had been struck from the first with the remarkably frank and noble expression of Preston's face. Possibly she would have admired him still more if she had known of the temptation he was resisting. It *was* a

temptation, for the composition would have amused Miss Pike, and he knew it. Here it is, that you may see it for yourselves.

FLAXIE'S COMPOSITION.

"DOMESTIC ANIMALS.

"There is classed throughout the species domestic animals. The cat is very domestic, and the turkey and the spider and the cow. The elephant is not very domestic, but he is a very useful animal. The pig is a very useful animal and very domestic. Were it not for the pig, what should we have to bake with our beans, or in which to fry our doughnuts? Ought we not then to be very thankful to the domestic animals for thus treating us so kindly?"

Preston never afterward thought of this little trip without the warmest gratitude to Miss Pike. He had dreaded meeting the family, but she explained matters to them so charm-

ingly that nobody thought of laughing at him. And then the handsome Rover was such a surprise and so generally admired that the mishaps of the day, dreadful as they had been at the time, seemed hardly worth mentioning now.

"So you've been adopted by a dog, my son," said Dr. Gray.

"How nice it was that you stopped at Bremen!" said Julia. "I suppose you really saved poor Rover's life. But then if it had n't been just you, he would n't have 'adopted' you. You make dogs love you by just looking at them."

"And I don't wonder," thought Miss Pike.

Until to-day she had never seen any of the Gray family except Mrs. Gray and Flaxie, but now, as she gazed about the room, she perceived at once that it was a most delightful

home. Mrs. Gray was a pretty, black-eyed woman, who seldom sat still many minutes at a time except when the children were safely asleep. Dr. Gray was a large, cheerful, agreeable man, fond of telling short stories. Julia, almost a young lady, had a remarkably sweet face, and it was a pleasure to see what care she took of noisy Phil and dainty little Ethel.

But loveliest of all was Madam Gray, the little fairy grandmother, with her white hair, white cap, white ribbons, and dear, benevolent face. She sat peacefully knitting, in her easy-chair, while everybody was talking and laughing around her; and Miss Pike fancied she was thinking of the friends of her youth, for something in her calm and quiet face seemed to say, —

“ They are all gone into a world of light,
And I alone sit lingering here.”

“And long may you linger, you dear, sweet, beautiful old lady,” thought Miss Pike, who knew, without being told, that the whole family were better for blessed Grandma Gray.

In a little more than two weeks Flaxie returned from Hilltop, this time “all sole alone,” declaring she had had a “perfectly lovely visit,” that well repaid her for the chicken-pox. She confided to her mother that it was easy enough travelling alone, for then you could keep your ticket and your check, and were not burdened with any troublesome crackers and cheese. But she said nothing of this sort to Preston, for her mother assured her it was wiser to drop the subject. Mrs. Gray never approved of teasing.

Miss Pike was gratified to see that Flaxie had improved very much since the days when

she went to school with the twin cousin, Milly Allen, at Hilltop.

“The pure and gentle influences of her home are moulding her into a fine little girl. She is less rude, less forward, more amiable, and thoughtful of others.”

For her part, Flaxie told everybody that Miss Pike was her “favorite friend,” and it made her “too happy for anything” to have her in the house all the time.

Lessons were taught every morning in the large pink chamber over the dining-room. It was a school for the whole family, from Julia, who learned French and painting, down to tiny Ethel, who was allowed sometimes to sit in the room and draw pictures on the slate, or hold kitty in her lap, if she would n't “'peak one word.”

Yes, and often Rover came, too, the quietest scholar of all, and perfectly happy to

crouch at his young master's feet and receive a caressing pat now and then.

It was far more interesting than going to the brick schoolhouse, which was poorly heated and not ventilated at all. Flaxie was inclined to sore throats and Julia to headaches, and it was for their sakes that Doctor Papa had decided this winter to have a governess in the house.

He could not have chosen a better one. Miss Pike was an excellent young lady, highly educated and refined. Moreover, there was a peculiar charm about her, you hardly knew what it was, though you could not be with her five minutes without feeling it.

Flaxie remembered how she used to go to the white school-house at Hilltop with her cousin Milly, and sit and admire Miss Pike, and "wish she could see her soul," which

Aunt Charlotte said was so much more beautiful than her face. And now Flaxie sat in an armed chair in the pink chamber and admired her just the same. Somehow there was a happy feeling all over the room because Miss Pike was in it. Flaxie's thoughts grew calm and pleasant, as if the world were made of sunshine and flowers; and she wished with all her heart to be truly good and always growing better. She hoped she should never do another wrong thing as long as she lived.

But there was one drawback to this home school, and that was Kittyleen. Did anything ever happen at the village, particularly at Dr. Gray's, that Kittyleen Garland did not find it out sooner or later? No, indeed. It was of no use trying to keep this little brown-eyed maid away unless you locked the door.

"I can read some now. If I go to school

I can read *all*," said Miss Kittyleen, coming in all out of breath and peeping at the children from between the rounds of a chair.

Then Flaxie had to take her down-stairs to Mrs. Gray, who dropped her work to amuse her.

Next day it would be the same thing over again.

"Fought I'd come up and look out o' your winner, Miss Pike. — There now, Effel, draw a little baby on the slate, and I'll say oh ! oh !"

But Ethel, who had been taught to obey orders, always shook her head sternly at Kittyleen, whispering, "Effie don't 'peak a word."

Miss Pike was never vexed with sweet little wayward Kittyleen ; but she did think Mrs. Garland ought to keep her at home. It was Flaxie whose temper was most tried,

for Flaxie was always the one to take the young rogue down-stairs ; and she found it hard sometimes to refrain from shaking her just a wee bit.

“ What *made* you throw Ethel’s kitty out of the window ? ” she would say. “ *You* are the little girl that picked my dolly’s eyes out. O, Kittyleen, I made my will, and I *was* going to give you the prettiest, cunningest present ; but if you don’t stay at home I shall make my will all over again, and not give you one single thing.”

Kittyleen had often heard of Flaxie’s “ will,” and had formed various opinions as to what it might be. Sometimes she thought it was a very large pin-cushion, sometimes she thought it was a sort of Christmas box ; but she always cried when Flaxie said she should “ make it all over again,” feeling that this was more than she could bear.

“O Flatsie, please don’t,” she would plead, with her little arms around her friend’s neck. “It’s such a *pretty* will! Me velly much obliged.”

“Oh, you good-for-nothing, darling little goosie. Let me kiss that snarl of hair. Does your hair ache, Kittyleen, when it is snarled?”

So the scolding generally ended in a kiss, for let Baby Kittyleen do what she would, Flaxie very well knew there was no guile in her tiny heart.

“Do you suppose, mamma, I’ll ever grow patient and good, like you and grammy and Miss Pike?” asked Flaxie one night, in a tone of deep discouragement. “I can’t keep my patience with Kittyleen when she comes and rubs out my figures on the slate. Why, mamma, I was real naughty to-day, I *lost my calm*.”

"But you do try to be patient, dear, I know you try," said Mrs. Gray.

"Yes, mamma, but I lost my calm," repeated the little girl dolefully. "I ought not to. I ought to do unto Kittyleen as I'd like to have other people do unto Ethel. That's the Golden-Rule way, Julia says. And should I like to have anybody whirl Ethel round by the shoulders and call her a *disgustable* girl?"

"She is a remarkably sweet child, my daughter. She loves you in spite of everything."

"Well, mamma, I love her, too, only I'd love her better if she didn't always go where she is n't wanted."

"Kittyleen goes *everywhere*," broke in little Ethel, on a high key. "She goes to church, Kittyleen does. May n't I go to church, I won't 'peak a word."

“Oh, mamma, do let her,” said Flaxie, forgetting her late distress of mind, and taking up a new subject. “She’d behave ever so much better than Kittyleen ; and she has a new bonnet, too.”

“Do you suppose it does Kittyleen any good to go to church ?” asked Mrs. Gray, smiling.

“No’m, but it would do Ethel good, for she’d sit still and hear every word like a little lady.

“Do *you* hear every word, Mary ?”

“N—o, mamma, not always, but I mean to. And Ethel has such a pretty bonnet.”

“Please, mamma,” echoed the little one eagerly, “such a pretty bonnet. And I won’t ’peak a word.”

“Well,” said Mrs. Gray, kissing baby’s cherry lips. “Perhaps we’ll let the *bonnet* go to church ; we will see.”

CHAPTER VIII.

FLAXIE IN CHURCH.

THE little one went to church the very next Sunday, and though sister "Ninny" had her in charge, Flaxie felt that she could not drop her off her own mind for a moment. So charming was wee Ethel in her blue silk bonnet, with a lace frill about the face, that Flaxie was obliged to turn half around and gaze at her, completely lost in admiration.

"Oh, she's the sweetest, best little dear! Ninny need n't say she is n't as pretty as Kitty-leen, for she certainly is! Anyway, her *bonnet* is just as pretty, and a great deal newer! Now there's Fanny Townsend's little sister,

I should think Fanny 'd be ashamed to have her wear such a bonnet."

Good Mr. Lee was preaching a sermon, which he thought the children in the congregation could nearly all understand; but the words seemed to Flaxie to run together without any meaning; she was not trying to listen.

"How Kittyleen does nestle about! Her mother does n't watch her a bit. She lets her do everything and go everywhere. I think she's a queer woman. My mamma would n't let Ethel stir out of the house if she could n't behave better than Kittyleen. No, she'd tie her in a chair.

"Why, there's Sadie Stockwell sitting with Aunty Prim. That's my dress Sadie has on. Pity Sadie's father can't buy her any dresses! Pity he drinks so, and is so poor! Pity Sadie is so lame, with her shoulders all

hitched up! How kind of Miss Pike, to give Sadie that beautiful book! When I grow up I'm going to be just like Miss Pike and make people love me. Perhaps I can be good if I'm *not* very homely."

Here Flaxie stole another glance at Ethel's bonnet. "Darling! She's just as still as a lady. I suppose she's saying to herself, 'Effel won't 'peak a word.' What if she *should* speak! Just think! I wonder if Mr. Lee knows she's at church? He loves Ethel, for he sent her a little box of honey. I shouldn't think he'd like to keep bees. I should think he'd be afraid they'd sting his little boy.—There, I must look up at Mr. Lee and hear what he says."

She raised her eyes to the pulpit. "How queer his head looks where the hair is so bald! The top of it is just as smooth and white! Why, it shines like the ivory ball on

Ninny's parasol. What did make Mr. Lee's hair all go off? Doctor Papa said *he* didn't know what made it go off, for Mr. Lee is n't old a bit, he's almost young." Gazing at the smooth, ivory-white top of the minister's head naturally reminded the little girl of something Phil had said not long ago when his hair was to be cut.

"Please don't cut it *very* short," said little Phil, "don't cut it as short as Mr. Lee's."

Flaxie was in great danger of smiling as she recollected this.

"Why don't I listen to the sermon?" thought she. "It's very wicked not to listen. Oh, he's gone way by the text! What is he saying about the brook of Cherith? They don't have Bible places in my geography, and I never heard of the brook of Cherith."

Next moment, after a fond glance at Ethel,

her eye fell upon Preston, and this gave still another turn to her thoughts.

“I should think Preston would be ashamed ever to say anything more to me about my ‘Domestic Animals.’ The composition he wrote the other day is ever so much worse than that.”

It was “The Story of Evangeline.” Miss Pike had read Longfellow’s beautiful poem aloud, and then asked the children to write down all they could remember of it.

Here, in Preston’s own words, is

THE STORY OF EVANGELINE.

“Evangeline lived in Nova Scotia. She was engaged to Gabriel. He was a blacksmith’s son. The English soldiers came and told the French to leave. They left. Evangeline and Gabriel did not go on the same boat. They got mixed up and separated. Evangeline did

not like it. She and her priest went all round out West to try to find Gabriel. He did not try to find *her*. Then she heard he had gone up North to trade for mules, and she went to hunt him up. She did not find him. Then she grew very old and went to live with the Quakers. She was a nun. One Sunday morning she picked some flowers and went to the poor-house, and found an old man in bed dying. She said, Gabriel. He looked up. They kissed each other and he died."

Dr. Gray said this story ought to be entitled "The Fatal Effects of a Kiss." Even grandma had laughed heartily on reading it, though Preston himself could see nothing in it to laugh at.

But it was by no means of Evangeline or her fatal kiss that Preston was thinking just now. Sitting quietly beside his father, he

was looking up at the minister and drinking in every word of the sermon. He had long been noted for his excellent behavior at church, and Mr. Lee had more than once said to the boy's father that none of the grown people listened to their pastor with more respectful attention than young Preston Gray. I am afraid Mr. Lee would not have said anything like that about Flaxie. She sat still enough, often very still indeed, but her eyes were roving all about, and so were her thoughts.

Miss Pike observed this, and it occurred to her that it would be a very sad thing if Flaxie should allow her inattention to grow into a confirmed habit. Very likely she said something of the sort to Dr. Gray, for she felt a great interest in the child's improvement. At any rate, that afternoon, when the four o'clock dinner was over and the Gray family

were seated in the back parlor, — Miss Pike, grandma, and all, — Doctor Papa said, rather unexpectedly, —

“Now suppose we ask these little people what the sermon was about this morning?”

He chanced to be looking at Flaxie as he spoke, but she said quickly, —

“Oh, please ask Julia first, papa, for she is the oldest. No, I mean Ethel, for she is the youngest.”

This was too absurd.

“Is n't *Phil* young enough? Perhaps we may begin with him. Think hard, my son, and see if you can remember anything Mr. Lee said to-day.”

Little Phil knitted his brows, but like Flaxie he had been looking around, not listening.

“Oh, papa, there was a woman there, had a thing on all bangled with beads.”

"Yes, my son ; but what did the minister say ?" Phil rolled his eyes.

"Oh, there was a little girl there, about as big as Ethel, had a white bonnet on and a white cloak."

"Yes ; but what did the minister say ?"

"Oh, Ethel," said crestfallen little Phil, turning to his baby sister for comfort, "you and I are too small. We can't remember what they preach, can we ?"

"We won't be too hard on you, my little son," said Doctor Papa. "You are only five years old ; but I am sure Mr. Lee says some things that even you can understand. Will you really try next Sunday to listen ?"

"I don't know how, papa," replied the little fellow, dropping his head.

"But I only asked you to try. You can try, can't you, Philip ? Now, next Sunday afternoon there will be a particularly large,

yellow banana in the fruit-dish at dessert, and it will go to the small boy who can tell me something — just a little something — the minister said.”

Phil's eyes began to shine. Oh, would n't he look straight at Mr. Lee next Sunday, and bring home lots and lots of the sermon !

“There, it's Flaxie's turn now,” said he, as Flaxie with a very sober face wedged her chair between her mother and Miss Pike.

“Mr. Lee said,” began she, hurriedly, “he said something about a brook, — I forget the name of the brook, — and he said something about a man, — I can't think what the man's name was, — and the ravens came and fed him.”

“The ravens are right. Go on. Why did the ravens feed him ?”

“I don't know, papa.” Flaxie looked helpless. “I didn't hear the rest. I had to watch Ethel for fear she'd talk.”

Dr. Gray said nothing more. He merely looked at his little daughter.

"Oh, papa, I won't do so again. I won't, truly. I'll hear every single word. But sometimes, you know, I can't understand."

"You could have understood this, my daughter; it was all very simple. Now, Preston?"

"It was about the prophet Elijah, sir. Elijah was a very solemn kind of man. He lived alone in the mountains and talked with God. There was a wicked king called Ahab, who worshipped idols, and Elijah went to him and told him it was wrong, and Ahab was very angry, and Elijah had to run away. He was told to go to the brook Cherith and drink the waters of it, and the ravens would come and feed him. And the ravens did. They brought him bread and meat night and morning till the brook dried up and Elijah

had to go somewhere else. I believe," said Preston, reflecting, "I believe that's all I can remember."

"You have done well. Do you know to what nation Elijah belonged?"

"No, sir."

"Can Julia tell?"

"Yes, sir, he was an Arab." Julia always looked very modest and pretty in answering questions. She went on now, with her hands folded in her lap. "Elijah had long thick hair hanging down his back, and he wore a cape of sheepskin; they called it a mantle. And he used to hide his face in it sometimes, and sometimes he rolled it up and used it for a staff."

"What is a raven?"

"It is a kind of crow."

"Oh, I thought it was a kind of ostrich," said Flaxie.

This extraordinary statement brought a smile to Preston's face, but his father said, "I was just thinking of a little story about an ostrich. God has strange ways of saving people's lives sometimes."

The children looked attentive, and Mrs. Gray drew Ethel into her lap to keep her quiet, while papa pared his orange and began:

"It was more than fifty years ago that Mr. Broadbent, a missionary, was travelling in Cape Colony. Where is that, Mary?"

"Oh, Africa, Africa; way down there at the bottom of the map."

"He had his family with him, and a few friends and some Hottentots. There were fourteen in the party. They were crossing a sandy table-land. What is that, Julia?"

"High and flat land, like a table."

"Right. They rode in wagons, drawn by oxen. It was a week's journey, but they had

not enough food to start with, and could buy but little at the last town on the way. So after they had travelled two days there was not much left but a small sack of rice and some tea and coffee. What would become of them? Five more days across a country where nothing grew, not even a blade of grass! Now and then they saw a bird flying overhead, but it was very swift, and far away, and they could hardly ever hit it with their guns."

"Oh, dear, did they starve?" asked Flaxie.

"There, now, if those birds had only been ravens!"

"The party stopped to rest, and they sent one of the Hottentots to watch the oxen; but I dare say he fell asleep, for several of the oxen strayed away.

"It seemed a great pity, for he had to go to look them up and was gone a long

time, and the travellers could not afford to wait."

"Well, if they were going to starve, papa, it did n't make any difference whether they waited or not."

"When the Hottentot came back he had a great piece of news to tell. He had found the nest of an ostrich, with forty eggs in it."

"Oh, papa, are ostrich eggs good to eat? Do tell us about it."

"So I will, my daughter, if I am not interrupted too often."

Flaxie blushed, and hid her face on Miss Pike's shoulder.

"The nest of an ostrich is a curiosity, and Mr. Broadbent waded through two or three miles of deep sand to see this one. You would think the mother bird had studied arithmetic all her life, for she seemed to have counted the eggs and set them in their places

with perfect exactness. In the middle were fourteen close together, and three or four feet away from them were the other twenty-six eggs in an unbroken circle, as even as a row of gold beads.

“The ostrich had been sitting on the ones in the middle. She expected to hatch just fourteen birds. She had not sat on the outer eggs at all, and there they were, entirely fresh and good to eat. She was saving them as food for the babies. She meant to break them, one after another, and give them to her chickens as fast as they should come out of the shell.

“It would be just as much food as the fourteen little ones would need, before they were old enough to go abroad with her and pick up their living in the desert. How do you suppose the ostrich knew this? She had hardly any brain, a very stupid bird indeed.

It must have been taught her directly from Heaven.

“Well, you see now that the travellers did not starve. For a meal they broke one of these eggs into a bowl, beat it well, and mixed with it a little flour, pepper, and salt, and fried it in a pan. It served very well instead of bread with their tea and coffee, and when they arrived at their station they had two or three eggs to spare.”

“Is that all?” asked Preston, as his father paused and offered a piece of orange to Ethel. “It was almost as good as the ravens, was n’t it?”

“I want to ask one question,” said Julia. “How large is an ostrich egg?”

“It weighs perhaps three pounds, and is almost as large around the middle as Ethel’s waist.”

“Well, I’m glad those people did n’t

starve," remarked Flaxie, "I was afraid one while they would."

I have introduced this true story here, partly for its own sake, and partly to give you a picture of one of the delightful Sunday afternoons at Dr. Gray's. If I had time I would like to tell you of the strong efforts which Flaxie made from this very day to overcome the bad habit of letting her thoughts wander in church. But this book is so small, and there are yet so many events waiting to be described, that I must now hasten on to something else.

In April Miss Pike went home, carrying with her the hearts of all the Grays, both young and old. The whole family insisted so strongly upon her coming back the next winter that she said, —

"Thank you; perhaps I may come, for I have been very happy at Laurel Grove, and

love every one of you dearly. But," she added, smiling, "you forget that you may not be here next winter. If Dr. Gray should be elected to Congress, won't you all go to Washington?"

"Oh, he does not expect to be elected," replied Mrs. Gray. "But if we *should* go to Washington, we shall want you to go there with us. Now, please remember."

"How delightful! Well, Mrs. Gray, I will say to you as you say to little Ethel, '*We will see.*'"

CHAPTER IX.

PRIMROSE BOWER.

FLAXIE did not hear this conversation, or she would have built various castles in the air in regard to "going to Congress." It is true, people often talked before her of the coming "election," and spoke of Dr. Gray as a "candidate"; but the words were mysterious, and soon faded out of her mind.

The snow and mud had disappeared. Dandelions were shining everywhere in the tender grass, and Ethel said, gleefully, —

"Oh, see the *dandy-diddles* !"

The birds burst forth into song and the trees into leaves. Flaxie pointed to the soft, fresh leaf-buds slowly unfolding, and said to

her mother, "Miss Pike calls them the beautiful thoughts the trees have kept all winter shut up in their hearts. Miss Pike is so funny!"

Summer came, and by the last of June Grandpa and Grandma Curtis and Grandma Hyde arrived from Kentucky. This made three grandmothers in the house at one time. The Gray family were remarkably rich in grandmothers; and there was still another, a fourth one, who might have come if she had not been too feeble, and that was dear Grandma Pressy.

The two from Kentucky were entirely unlike, yet each in her way was excellent and charming, — tall, queenly Grandma Hyde, wearing gray silk and a turban, and always piecing together a silk patch-work quilt; roly-poly Grandma Curtis, clad entirely in black, and always knitting children's stock-

ings with needles that clicked. But they were alike in one respect ; they both remembered everything they had ever seen or heard of, and everything that had ever happened since the world began. Yes, and they were both gifted with wondrous powers of story-telling. Tiny Grandma Gray, with her sweet, low voice, had hardly a chance to speak ; for the Kentucky ladies were talking morning, noon, and night.

It was delightful to hear them, and Grandma Gray listened and laughed, her white cap-strings fluttering, and said she was renewing her youth. But by-and-by it began to tire her head, for she was very delicate indeed, and she complained that she could not sleep. Still she *would* stay in the parlor, she enjoyed the talking so much ; and Mrs. Prim came one day, and declared she should carry her off.

"You must stay with me a while and be quiet," said Mrs. Prim, who liked to manage everything, "and Mary shall come with you to take care of you."

Flaxie did not spring up and exclaim, "Oh, Auntie Prim, thank you, thank you, I'd be so glad to go!" for the truth was she did not wish to go in the least. At the same time, she felt it a high honor to be invited to Mrs. Prim's to take care of Grandma Gray. She could remember the time, not so very long ago, when she had been sent away from home because Grandma Gray could not bear the noise she made.

"I'm growing a great deal stiller and a great deal better as I grow up," thought the little girl, with a throb of pride, "but I did n't suppose Auntie Prim knew it."

"We don't like to spare our dear little Mary," said both the Kentucky grand-

mothers in a breath ; and then Flaxie felt prouder than ever.

“ Oh, she can come home every day to see you, and you will be surprised at the number of pillow-cases she will make ; she always sews very steadily at my house,” replied Mrs. Prim. “ Run now, Mary, and get your hat.”

Mrs. Prim had the finest house and grounds in Laurel Grove, but it was very still there, oh, altogether too still ! The gardener never talked, except to himself, the chambermaid was rather deaf, and Kitty, the cook, did not like any one in her nice, orderly kitchen. Flaxie thought it a very dull place, except at the hours when Mr. Prim came home to his meals.

One day she sat in the parlor, sewing “ over and over ” upon a pillow-case. Out of doors it was a lovely June day. The trees, and

grass, and birds, and flowers, were nodding at one another, and having a gay time, and Flaxie longed to be with them. But no, at "Primrose Bower," as Mr. Prim called his home, it was necessary to stay in the house ; for Auntie Prim thought a little girl nine years old ought to "sew her seams," and *then* she might play, perhaps, if she found any time.

Strange there should n't be any dog at Primrose Bower, or even a cat ; but Grandma Gray was there, and that was a comfort. The more Flaxie waited upon the silver-haired, sweet-voiced, fairy grandmother, the better she loved her ; only dear Grandma Gray was always going to sleep on the sofa, and then you had to keep still enough to hear a pin drop for fear of waking her up.

"Well," said Auntie Prim, coming into the parlor with her bonnet on, "I gave you

work enough to last a good while, didn't I, Mary?"

"Yes, 'm, ever so long," replied Flaxie, with a sorrowful glance at the pillow-case.

"So you won't mind staying in the house with grandma, will you? I'm going to the stores to buy a calico dress and various things; but when I come back you may run home, and stay as long as you like."

"Yes, 'm," said Flaxie, meekly.

She thought Auntie Prim spent a good deal of time at the stores, and was afraid if she bought "various things" it would be pretty late by the time she came back; and Flaxie did want to ask Grandma Curtis a few questions about Venus, the colored girl who lived at her house in Kentucky, and she wanted a ride before dark on Preston's pony.

"Let me see," said Auntie Prim, thoughtfully, "perhaps it would be better for you

to promise me not to leave this room while I'm gone. You mean well, Mary, but you're *so* fond of running! Yes, on account of Grandma Gray, I think I should feel easier if you were to make me a promise."

"Yes, 'm, I will promise! I'll stay right here. I'll not go out of this room," replied Flaxie; so sweetly that Mrs. Prim never suspected the child's sensitive pride was wounded.

"She thinks I'm a horrid little girl. She thinks I'm just awful," said Flaxie to herself, as she looked out of the window and watched her aunt walking away with a gray-fringed parasol in one hand and a shopping-bag in the other. "My mamma would have trusted me without any promise! She'd *know* I wouldn't run off and leave Grandma Gray!" Very soon Grandma Gray came in

and said she was going to *try* to get a nap on the sofa, and hoped Flaxie would keep pretty still. "Yes, 'm," sighed Flaxie ; and after this she breathed as softly as possible for fear of making a noise.

Grandma was asleep in two minutes, with her handkerchief over her eyes, and that made the room seem more lonesome than ever. Outside a stray cat came and sat on the window-sill, begging to come in ; and as she opened her mouth to mew, she looked, Flaxie thought, like a wee, wee old lady, whose little teeth were more than half gone. Flaxie loved cats ; why not let her in ?

But no ! The window had a fly-screen, and besides, Auntie Prim did n't approve of cats. "It's *no, no, no*, all the time. I don't like Primrose Bower," thought poor Flaxie, dropping her work and stealing on tiptoe to the mantel, to smell the flowers in the bronze vase.

They were lovely roses and lilies, but they looked as if they longed to be out of doors, where they could bend their tired heads. The chairs seemed rather uncomfortable, too, standing up so stiff and straight against the gilded walls. Even the gilded fireboard looked as if it was set in the fireplace very hard, and had no hope of ever coming out.

“Oh, it’s so still here, and so shut up! I wish there was something alive in the room,” thought the little sewing-girl, going back to her task.

She did not know that close behind her there *was* something alive—dreadfully alive—a cross, disappointed, hungry bee! How had he got there, into that shut-up room where even the little flies never dared come?

But there he was, and he would not go away without doing mischief. Perhaps he had had some family trouble, which had

soured his temper ; or perhaps he mistook Flaxie for a new variety of blush rose, of great size and sweetness. At any rate, he flew straight toward her, and without the least ceremony stung her on the wrist. Poor Flaxie ! Was it not rather severe ? Particularly as she dared not scream. " I must scream, I will scream," she thought in agony ; " I will, I will ! "

But no. For grandma was fast asleep. She must not wake grandma, though the sky should fall.

" I'll run out-doors. I'll run home to mamma. I *must* go where I can scream."

But no ! She could n't even go into the entry. Had n't she promised ? And you must know Flaxie belonged to the sort of little girls who hold a promise to be as sacred as the oath of a queen.

So she stayed where she was, and bore the

anguish in silence. She could not possibly help hopping up and down, but she hopped softly; she could not help groaning, but she groaned in whispers; she could not keep the tears back, but she sobbed them noiselessly into her handkerchief. I don't know what you think of this, little reader, but I think it was truly grand and heroic.

Are you nine years old, and have you ever borne the sting of a bee, or the drawing of a tooth, without uttering a sound? Ah, you have! Then I would like to see you, and shake hands!

Grandma Gray woke presently, and saw Flaxie shaking with sobs, her head buried in the cushion of Uncle Prim's chair. You may be sure she was not long in learning what the matter was, and in calling Kitty from the kitchen to bathe the poor puffed wrist with arnica.

"Ah, thin, and a bee always knows what is swate," said Irish Kate, bathing the wrist softly.

"The blessed little darling!" murmured grandma, not referring, of course, to the bee. "To think you should n't have made one bit of noise to disturb your grandmother! I would n't have blamed you if you'd screamed with all your might."

"But, grandma, I promised you I would n't make a noise."

"So you did, precious child. I forgot that."

"And I promised Auntie Prim I'd stay in this room. Oh, how I did want to go out and scream!"

"Little Mary," said gentle Grandma Gray, taking Flaxie in her arms, "I'm proud of you, my dear!"

"Ah, wasn't it worth all Flaxie had

suffered to hear such words as these? When had anybody been proud of her before?

The pain was over, but the little wrist was still "a sight to behold" when Auntie Prim came home with her calico dress and "various things" in her bag; and grandma said, in a ringing voice, —

"Mrs. Prim, we have a little girl here who is quite a heroine. Yes, a heroine, I say!"

"Do you mean our little Mary? Why, what has she done?" asked auntie, coolly, as she put away her bonnet and parasol. But she was n't quite so cool after she had heard the story.

"Why, you good, high-minded little girl! A grown woman could n't have been braver," said she, and actually kissed Flaxie.

"It is a great pity I bound you by a promise; I need n't have done it. Some little girls

can be trusted without any promises," she added, looking at grandma with an approving smile.

Flaxie blushed for joy. She had always had a vague feeling of being looked down upon by Auntie Prim, as a wild little girl who was "*so fond of running*"; and now to have this stern, good woman praise her so !

"But," said auntie, unrolling the dotted brown calico and laying it across her lap, "how came that bee in *here*, with the doors shut and the fly-screens all in ?"

As she spoke, *two* bees buzzed and circled slowly above her head. In her surprise I must confess Mrs. Prim screamed. Flaxie was delighted. Mrs. Prim, however, was a little ashamed, for the minister, Mr. Lee, at that moment entered the door.

"Ah, what's this?" said he, laughing ; "are you hiding away my bees?"

"*Your* bees?" cried Mrs. Prim; and she looked up at Mr. Lee, who stood, hat in hand, his bald head shining, as Flaxie had once fancied, like the ivory ball on Julia's parasol.

"Yes, ma'am, *my* bees! They swarmed this afternoon, and your gardener told me he suspected some of them had come down here, and settled in your chimney. He saw them flying over the roof of the house."

Mrs. Prim was a good woman, and had a high respect for her pastor. It seemed very strange and very improper that she should set a trap for his bees; but she laughed, and they all laughed, and she said Stillwater, the gardener, should go out on the roof through the sky-window, and look down the parlor chimney, and see what was going on inside.

Stillwater did so, and reported that a fine

family of bees had begun housekeeping in the chimney.

"Yes," said Mr. Prim, who came in just then, "and they are making themselves too much at home altogether! Why, they think they have a right not only to the chimney, but to the whole parlor, and mean to creep out around the edges of the fireboard, and peep at us whenever they choose.

"But they needn't have stung my good little Mary, and they must not sting her again," said Mr. Lee, patting her head. He had been very much pleased of late by Flaxie's attentive behavior at church; and he thought now, as he looked at her fine young face, that she was improving faster in character than any other little girl he knew in Laurel Grove.

And to prevent further mischief from the bees, the fireboard was fastened in very

firmly. Uncle Prim did this with little wads of gilt paper; and even Auntie Prim, who was so particular, declared no one could have made it look better.

"I'm glad you like my beehive, ladies," said Uncle Prim, with a low bow. "And now I hope the bees will do their duty, and fill it with the very nicest honey, from the very sweetest flowers that grow in Primrose garden; and Mr. Lee is heartily welcome to every drop!"

"Thank you, sir," returned Mr. Lee, "but if the honey is going to belong to me, I shall take pleasure in presenting it to little Mary. She has well earned it by being such a martyr this afternoon."

Flaxie had no clear idea what a martyr meant, but was sure from Mr. Lee's tone it must be something he approved. Therefore, she ran home in the finest spirits, to relate

the stirring events of the afternoon to her family, and the two admiring grandmothers.

"And mamma," asked she, as soon as she saw her mother alone, "may I give the honey to Sadie Stockwell next Christmas? Let me go my own self, please, with Black-drop and the little sleigh, and carry it."

"Perhaps so, my dear. But it is quite uncertain where you will be next Christmas," replied Mrs. Gray, who had strong reason to think she might be in Washington.

Flaxie, however, had forgotten all about Washington. "Oh, perhaps I'm going to Hilltop," thought she. "But that would n't be quite so splendid as to have Milly come to my house. If she can come to my house next winter, and go to school to Miss Pike in the pink chamber, I'll be perfectly happy."

The little girl's dreams that night were of

going to some wonderful country she had never seen before. It must have been somewhere in fairyland, for

“Everything was strange and new,
And honey-bees had lost their stings,
And horses were born with eagles’ wings.”

CHAPTER X.

THE LAST FEATHER.

THINGS happen to us sometimes that are even better than we have dreamed. To be with Miss Pike in the pink chamber again had seemed happiness to Flaxie; but to be with Miss Pike in Washington, going everywhere and seeing everything, this was bliss indeed!

Dr. Gray was elected to Congress; Preston was sent to boarding-school; Julia stayed with Grandma Gray at Mrs. Prim's; and Mrs. Gray went with her husband and the three youngest children to board in Washington for the winter.

Flaxie had never before seen so beautiful a city, though she had travelled much more than ordinary girls of her age. For days she never tired of looking down from the window of her fourth-story room, upon the clean, white avenue, and watching the horses, carriages, and people passing to and fro. High, high above the heads of the people was a network of telegraph wires glistening in the sun, and Flaxie thought if the wires would only go higher yet, and bind the stars and the earth together, how grand it would be. She called this chamber her "sky-room," and shared it with her "favorite friend," Miss Pike. At the same hotel were Mrs. Garland and Kittyleen, and Kittyleen's cousin Cora, a girl of Flaxie's own age. Truly, as little Ethel had said, Kittyleen did "go everywhere"; but who would have thought of her following the Grays to Washington? But

then, this was Mrs. Garland's native city, and she had come here to spend part of the winter, and take lessons in painting.

Kittyleen was just as pretty, and dear, and sweet, as ever,—and just as troublesome. Her room was next Miss Pike's, and of course Miss Pike or Flaxie could not stir without her following them, for Kittyleen adored Flaxie; and besides, her mamma was always busy painting.

She followed them to the Capitol, when they went to look at the statues and pictures; she followed them to the stores, when they went shopping. Little Ethel never cared to go anywhere without her mother, and Phil had some larger boys for playmates; but Kittyleen felt that *she* belonged to *Flaxie*. Mrs. Garland laughed, and said she ought to be tied to Flaxie's side by a blue ribbon, like a little Skye terrier.

And here I think I must tell you how Kittyleen went to the White House to the President's reception, where she was as much out of place as a humming-bird in a flock of crows. But it was not the child's fault. Her mother was very thoughtless, or she would not have asked Miss Pike to take her; and Miss Pike had no idea what she was doing, or she would not have consented.

But first I shall be obliged to speak of Flaxie's vanity. You may have observed long ago that she was fond of looking in the glass; and I regret to say the habit still continued. In most respects she was constantly improving; but Doctor Papa said he really feared the nice new clothes she wore at Washington had a bad effect upon her mind. The strange ladies at the hotel sometimes said in her hearing as she passed by, "Who is that pretty little girl? Isn't she lovely?"

This was unfortunate; for now she never went anywhere, and saw people looking at her, but she fancied they were thinking, "Isn't she lovely?" And on the Saturday afternoon when she was going to the President's reception she wished to look as pretty as possible, so that the people at the White House, and perhaps the President himself, might admire her.

"Mamma," said she, "may I wear my crushed-strawberry dress, and my long-button gloves, and my bonnet with the red bird?"

"Oh, no, my dear, they are quite unsuitable. I am very sorry now that I promised to take you at all, for I'm afraid there will be a great crowd."

"But I never saw the President, mamma, and I like a great crowd. And I'll be so careful of my best bonnet!" pleaded Flaxie in a whining tone, very irritating to her

mother, who was dressing in haste. It sounded like the troublesome teasing Flaxie of two or three years ago.

"My little daughter," said Mrs. Gray, pausing as she pinned her collar, "you cannot believe that I know better than you do how you should dress? Very well, I will allow you to wear your best bonnet on this condition: If that scarlet bird gets broken, you are not to have another bird this winter, no, nor even a feather!"

Flaxie hesitated. Much as she wished to look "lovely," she did not like to do anything her mamma disapproved. Still, how *could* she hurt her bonnet, just wearing it to a party?

"Make haste, child, here are Miss Pike and Kittyleen," said Mrs. Gray.

And the little girl finally laid aside her every-day hat she had been holding in her

hand, put on her best bonnet with a blushing, downcast face, and walked slowly behind her mother. Little Ethel threw kisses after them, though quite disturbed in her small mind because "Kittyleen went everywhere," while she and Phil had to stay with Mrs. Fry.

Mrs. Gray and Miss Pike did not consider what a foolish thing they were doing, till they walked up the gravel path to the White House, and saw the long line of carriages.

"This is no place for children ; it is a great crowd," said Mrs. Gray, nervously.

Mounting the front steps, they saw seated on one side of the large entrance hall a band of musicians, all in uniform, playing bugles, fifes, cornets, and drums. There were no children to be seen, and none of the vast number of people who had entered, or were entering the hall, seemed to take the

slightest notice of Flaxie's beautiful clothes. They all stood in a line, three or four abreast, and if they could be said to be looking at anything it was at the beautiful windows straight before them, — not glass windows, the panes were lovely gems of various shapes and sizes, and nearly all the colors of the rainbow ; and of course you could not look through them into the White House.

“Keep fast hold of my hand, Mary,” said Mrs. Gray. “The people are crowding in behind us.”

“Keep fast hold of my hand, Kittyleen,” said Miss Pike, “or I shall lose you.”

“Where are we going ?” asked little Kittyleen, who might have been going up in a balloon for all she knew to the contrary.

“We are trying to go through a door, but you can't see the door there are so many people ahead of us.”

“Well, when we come to the door and get through it, then we shall see the President, sha’n’t we?” said Flaxie. “But oh, dear, I don’t care so much about him as I did! It takes so long, and the people push so.”

By this time, the little party of four were wedged in very tight. They could not move one step, except as they were pushed. Flaxie’s crushed-strawberry dress was crushed quite out of sight, and nothing was to be seen of her but two bewildered blue eyes, a tuft of flaxen hair, and — sad to relate — a broken-winged bird of Paradise!

And where was little Kittyleen? By looking down, down, among the ladies’ cloaks and skirts, Miss Pike could just espy the top of the little girl’s bonnet, and the end of her nose.

“It is n’t very comfortable, *is* it, Kittyleen?” said Miss Pike, pitying, but not know-

ing how to help her. "No 'm, it is n't *very* com-fi-a-ble," replied the darling, catching her breath.

The crowd had been moving very, very slowly, but now it stopped altogether.

"The people at the front, who got in first, are halting to shake hands with the President," said a man in the crowd; "and we must wait for them to move on."

They waited perhaps fifteen minutes; and all the while the people behind could not stand still, but kept pushing.

"Don't they know we *can't* move? Why do they push?" grumbled Flaxie, indignantly. "Do tell them to keep still, mamma; tell the people behind to keep still."

Mrs. Gray only laughed.

"Mamma, they don't obey the Golden Rule, or they would n't push so and hurt."

Flaxie was always talking about the Golden Rule.

“My daughter, we are here and must bear it. Try to be brave and not cry.”

“Oh, mamma, I don’t mean to cry; but they squeeze so hard that they squeeze the tears right out of my eyes. I just know I shall die!”

Flaxie’s wail was piteous, indeed; but it was little Kittyleen—ever so much shorter and younger and frailer; dear, patient Kittyleen—who was in far more danger of being hurt. She must have been almost suffocated by this time, for absolutely nothing, not even the crown of her bonnet, was to be seen. In real alarm Miss Pike exclaimed, “How shall I get this child up to give her some air?”

“What, a little child here? Can’t you lift her up, ma’am, and set her on my shoulder?” said a gentleman just ahead.

Mrs. Gray and Miss Pike plunged down for Kittyleen, and succeeded in drawing her up from her dangerous hiding-place among the cloaks and skirts, and setting her aloft upon the kind stranger's shoulders. She gave several little shuddering gasps, and her eyes were full of tears ; but when Miss Pike asked, "Darling, how do you feel now ?" she answered, with a pathetic little smile, —

"I feel more com-fi-a-ble."

But Flaxie was still crying. It was not only for the discomfort. She saw now what a silly girl she had been to wear her best clothes ; and the broken wing of the bird of Paradise dangling before her eyes added the last feather to her weight of misery.

The crowd began to move again by half-inch steps. The open door was reached at last. Now they were fairly inside the White House ; yet still there was one room to

cross, in order to reach the President. But Flaxie's feelings were greatly changed. She no longer expected the President to admire, or even look at her. Why should he, so forlorn and dilapidated as she was, and so very, very small?

But she had little time for these humble reflections. As they entered the door of the White House a current of warm air met them, and Mrs. Gray grew instantly faint. A strange lady in the crowd caught a fan from another strange lady, and gave it to Miss Pike. Miss Pike fanned Mrs. Gray a moment, and then she and some one else dragged her out from the narrow line of people who were pushing toward the next room, and extended her upon the floor before an open window.

Mrs. Gray was perfectly colorless, and her eyes were closed. "She has lost her con-

sciousness," said some one, just as Flaxie broke through the crowd and rushed toward her.

"Oh, mamma, mamma, *are* you dead? Speak to me, speak to me, mamma," wailed the child.

And Mrs. Gray opened her eyes, and smiled. She was obliged to smile in order to reassure her little daughter, but she was of course too weak yet to go back to the dreadful crowd. She needed and must have rest and quiet and fresh air.

"Children, do you care much about seeing the President?" asked Miss Pike. "He looks very much like other men; he does n't wear a crown."

"Oh, *does n't* wear a crown?" echoed little Kittyleen. Perhaps she had fancied he did, or, at any rate, that he was in some way a very grand and radiant being.

“Well, *I* don’t want to see him, — not with my things all torn off and looking like this,” said Flaxie, in deep discouragement.

She was nearly as anxious to leave the White House as she had been to enter it. But when and how could they ever get out?

“Ladies,” said a gentleman who had left the crowd in disgust, and stood by the wall with his arms folded, — “ladies, if you are ill and want to go home, I can put you out of the window. Will you allow me?”

It sounded very funny, and Miss Pike laughed; but he was quite in earnest. “Would you like to have me put you out, madam? Here, mount this stool.”

“Indeed, I would like it; but can you do it, sir?” asked Miss Pike. “I’m pretty heavy.”

The polite gentleman answered by lifting her up by the shoulders, so that she found

no trouble in climbing out of the low window, and alighting upon the piazza.

“Oh, thank you, sir,” said she. “Now I will stand here, and help down the other lady and the children.”

This was easily managed; and soon all the little party were safely drawing long breaths, and laughing in the pure air outside; and Miss Pike said, “Here we are at the back of the house, and if the servants should spy us they would take us for a set of tramps. But, Mrs. Gray, I don’t care for that, I’m so very thankful to have got you and Kittyleen out alive.”

They hastened down the steps of the back piazza, and got around to the front door, and into the gravel path, and thence to the street, as fast as possible.

When Doctor Papa came home to early dinner, his wife related the adventure.

"We made a great mistake in taking the children," said she, "but dear little Kittylen was wonderfully patient and reasonable."

Flaxie twisted uneasily in her chair, feeling that all praise of the little one was a rebuke to herself.

"Yes, papa, Kittylen was very good. I don't see how she *could* be so good. But you see I—why, I had a dreadful time. I was so afraid about mamma. Why, I was n't sure when I saw her there on the floor that she was really alive! She lay there as much as ten minutes, I think, without any *conscience* at all!"

"Oh, not half a minute," laughed Mrs. Gray. And then she laughed again as she held up a fan, a pretty painted one with ivory sticks. "I'm afraid the owner of this fan will think I *never* had any conscience! It was given to Miss Pike to fan me when

I fainted, and we could n't tell who gave it, and so we had to bring it home."

"You might have left it with one of the porters at the front door," said Doctor Papa.

"Oh, we never thought of that! What a pity!"

As they were going down to dinner, Flaxie saw her now ruined bird of Paradise lying in the basket of rubbish, ready for Lena the chambermaid to carry away. Her mother had put it there without saying a word. Flaxie knew she had lost her pretty bird and could not have another one, "no, not even a feather"; and though it seemed a hard punishment, she felt that it was just.

A few days after this all the Grays and Miss Pike, with Kittyleen and her cousin, Cora Garland, went to Mount Vernon to see the tomb and the old home of General Washington. It was delightful; and the next

spring, when Congress had risen and all these gay times were only a memory, Flaxie never tired of telling Grandma Gray how she had played on the tiny piano that once belonged to Lady Washington, and how "just exactly" it had sounded like her own doll's piano in the back parlor at home.

Grandma Gray listened kindly to these reminiscences, and so indeed did all Flaxie's playmates at Laurel Grove, though I wonder they did not sometimes smile at the constant refrain, "Last winter, when I was at Washington." One little story, the adventures of the runaway rings, you will find in the next chapter, in Flaxie's own words, as she related it to Grandma Gray.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RUNAWAY RINGS. — FLAXIE'S STORY.

"OH, dear, the old man is out! Why, grandma, don't you know what I mean? I mean the rain-man! He always comes out of that little weather-house on the mantel, and looks around, you know, before it begins to rain.

"And there, just see, it's pouring this minute, and there are lots of people going by with umbrellas. It makes me think of that time last winter, when it rained so hard, and I lost those rings. Do you want to hear about it? Well, you just lie still and I'll tell you, and we'll have a beautiful time.

Is n't it a perfect state of bliss to think I've got home, and can take care of you?

"But I did like to be at Washington. It did n't seem like winter, with the rain a-rain-ing, and the sun a-shining, and no snow hardly ever, and the streets as clean as a floor.

"Besides, you know how I love Miss Pike; she's my favorite friend. And a hotel is splendid, there are so many children in it. Only they're not all alike. Some are ever so nice, and some *would* be nice if they did n't have temper.

"Now, there was Cora Garland, Kittyleen's cousin. She had a temper like this: see me walk across the floor, grandma, with my head thrown back,—so. *That* was the kind of temper *she* had. But she did n't have it very often, and she was good to Ethel and Kittyleen and Phil. I liked Cora; I mean,

almost always I did. And I never saw a girl with so many rings and earrings and gold bracelets and things. Did you ever see an honest, true diamond, grammy, hard enough to scratch on the window-pane, and bright enough to put your eyes out — almost? Well, one of Cora's rings was a diamond. I suppose it came out of a mine. And one of her rings was red; I forget the name of it; fiery, rosy red, and all of a twinkle, with a row of pearls around it, like little white currants.

“Well, I used to borrow Cora's rings and bracelets sometimes, and she used to borrow these old silver bangles. I don't see what she wanted of *them*. You see they are just bands of silver, with five-cent pieces dangling down! But mamma did n't approve of my wearing Cora's things.

“‘Little Mary, I don't approve of borrowed finery,’ said she.

“So she wanted me to take them back. And I always did take them back ; but sometimes I forgot, and borrowed them over again. I don’t remember now how I happened to forget.

“Oh, I *thought* I was n’t telling the story right. We lived up, up, up, away up on the fourth floor! Did *you* ever go up in an elevator? You would n’t like it, but I did. Our room was large and ever so pretty, with two windows in it, where you could look right out on the avenue. And there was a fireman, who used to come in and fix the fire in the grate.

“I slept with Miss Pike, and sometimes I would n’t wake in the morning till ever so late, and she would go down to breakfast without me. But she did n’t care; she said she did n’t expect me to get up when I was asleep, for how could I, you know? And by

and by she always came back and curled my hair, and let me go down to breakfast with Ethel and Kittyleen and Phil and Cora.

“But before I’d go down, and before Miss Pike would come back, and while I’d be asleep, the fireman would come in with his bucket and fix the fire. I ought to tell about this, so you ’ll understand better when I get to the rings. You never knew whether there was coal-dust on the fireman’s face or not, for he was always as black as could be, and could n’t be any blacker. His name was Lijar, just as if he came out of the Bible and had been fed by ravens; but somehow I didn’t think he was very pious. No, I seemed to think he was rather *un*-pious, because he rolled his eyes around so much, and kept laughing to himself.

“And there I’d be fast asleep on the bed; but sometimes I’d just peep out under my

eyelashes, and he'd be taking down some of the pretty things from the mantel and looking at them and laughing to himself. I thought it was very impolite. He ought n't to have touched a single thing, now ought he, with his hands so black and dirty? But I never once thought of his stealing, — *not then.*

“Well, one night, after I'd borrowed those rings back again, — the diamond ring and the red one with white currants round it, — I put both the rings in a blue box, or I thought I did, and set the box on the bureau right under the looking-glass. And Lena stood at the door and saw me.

“Why, I forgot to tell you about Lena! She was the chambermaid, that went around all day with a pink handkerchief tied on her head, and a broom, and a pail. She was French. She always walked into my room

before I was up, same as Lijar did. And she laughed, and shook the feather-duster at me sometimes. I suppose she wished I was n't there on the bed, for she wanted to take off the sheets. She did n't know how to talk the American language very well, and I did n't blame her; for of course French people have to learn to talk, just like babies. But she was a pretty girl, and I supposed she was a great deal better than Lijar. She told me one day she could say her prayers in French, and so I never once thought of her stealing, — *not then*.

“That night — the night I lost the rings — she was there in the hall, and I was ‘coming along, waltzing a waltz. She set down her broom and pail, and took those rings and put them on her little finger. I let her do it. And she said, ‘Oh, *wee, wee,*’ and kept smiling.

"I remember it was in the evening, and I had just come up from playing in the public parlor, and I had on my crushed-strawberry dress and an orange in my hand, and Lena said I was as pretty as her little sister, and I asked if her little sister wore curls. And she said, 'No, she don't ever does.' That was the best Lena could talk.

"Then she gave me back the rings, and I was going right to bed, so I put them in the box on the bureau, — or I thought I did, — and Lena stood at the door and looked at me the whole time. I remember there was pink cotton in the box, and the sweetest picture on the cover. It was Miss Pike's box she has got it now.

"Then I went to bed, and Miss Pike set up the screen between me and the gas-light, and she read, and I went to sleep. How I did sleep! I'd been playing blind-man's-buff,

and was so tired ; and I never woke up next morning till after Lijar had been in to fix the fire, and Lena had been in to bring the clean towels. The first thing I knew I opened my eyes, and there were Miss Pike and Cora and Kittyleen all laughing at me.

“ ‘Come, you little sleepy girl,’ said Miss Pike ; and she kissed me on both cheeks. I never once thought about the rings, but got up and let her curl my hair. She said it was Washington’s birthday, and curled a curl and laughed, but I knew Kittyleen and Cora were very hungry waiting.

“After breakfast they came up with me, and so did Ethel and Phil. And I remember how it rained, harder than it does now, ever so much. And we stood by that beautiful window, and looked out to see the soldiers parade.

“They did n’t mind the rain, dripping on

their pretty caps and uniforms and white gloves. First they put out one foot, and then they put out the other foot, and at the same time, to the music. Cora said it was like wooden dolls, with joints in their knees.

“She did n’t see that I had n’t any rings on my fingers, and I did n’t see it myself. We were watching the soldiers on the street, and the people on the pavement following on after the soldiers. The people all had umbrellas. You could n’t see their heads; all you could see was umbrellas.

“The children wanted to dress up their dolls like soldiers. They were girl dolls, with Kate Greenaway dresses, but Miss Pike said they could be woman’s-rights soldiers, why not? And she is so kind! She made some shiny black soldier-caps, and we tucked up the dolls’ curls; and so cunning and brave as they looked!

“Afterwards I remember Miss Pike went to the next room to read to Mrs. Garland, and I waited for her; and the children went down to lunch with mamma. But oh, when they were all gone, then I thought of those rings, and went to the box on the bureau. But just think, grandma, they were n’t there! There was the pink cotton in the box, but not a ring to be seen!

“A perfectly awful feeling went over me. I know I must have turned pale, for I had to pour my handkerchief wringing wet with cologne. Why, just you think! Did you ever have anything so terrible happen to *you*? Why, those rings cost more money than I had in this world! And Cora’s grandfather gave her the red ring, that died!

“I hunted and hunted, under the bed and under the rugs, and pulled the things out of

the drawers. And I knew papa would have to pay for them, and he'd think I was very expensive! He would have to cure ever so many sick people for it, and ride in the night for days and days to pay for those rings! 'Specially the beautiful red one with white currants round it. And she thinking so much of her grandpa that died! I knew she'd never forgive me, but always go around with her head thrown back; and how I should feel!

"I wished then I'd obeyed mamma, and not borrowed what did n't belong to me. It was just awful to have mamma and Miss Pike know it. I wished I need n't be obliged to tell."

CHAPTER XII.

THE HUNT. — FLAXIE'S STORY, CONTINUED.

"WHEN Miss Pike came in from reading to Kittyleen's mother I was crying in the bed.

"First I wanted to say I was crying about my silver mug that Kittyleen dented all up, hitting it against the grate; and so I was — a little. I could always cry about that! But my truly tears were for the rings, and I would n't let myself be so mean as not to tell the truth. Besides, I wanted Miss Pike to help me find them, you know.

"Then I told her; I *made* myself tell. And she said, 'Ah, little Mary, you've been borrowing again!'

“I knew she was displeased, because she was so cool in her manner, and said ‘little Mary.’

“‘Oh, please don’t blame me,’ said I. And I told her I was sure Lena had stolen the rings, for she knew where they were, and saw me put them in the box. ‘Oh, little Mary, is that all the reason you have for saying so?’ said she. She thought it was n’t any reason at all, unless I knew it was true.

“‘But I do know it, Miss Pike,’ said I. ‘Lena always wanted those rings for her little sister; and when she came in this morning, and found me asleep, she could take them as well as not. I always thought she had a horrid face; she looks as if she’d steal!’

“I spoke so sure and certain that I expected Miss Pike would believe me and ring the bell for Lena; and I was going to hide under the

bed when Lena came in. But instead of that, she only stood there looking displeased, and said 'Oh, little Mary' again.

"Then she talked about the Golden Rule, and of course I did n't want to hear about *that*, not just then. 'Was it kind to s'pect people,' she said, 'was it right?'

"And I knew in my heart it was n't, but I thought Lena took those rings just the same.

"Then Miss Pike began to hunt everywhere; in all my pockets, and in my doll's pockets, and in the waste-basket, and in the books, and under the table. The more she hunted the worse I felt. Every time she did n't find the rings I kept thinking she'd say, 'Little Mary,' again, and talk about 'hoping this will be a lesson to you, little Mary.' But she did n't. She was just as sweet! She went with me to early dinner, and let me

have lady-fingers and ice-cream, and three nuts and six raisins, just as she always did.

“And after dinner she hunted again. She took all the clothes out of the closet, and shook them and put them back again; and oh, I don’t know what she did n’t do, and it was no use.

“‘Oh, *shall* I have to tell Cora?’ said I. And she said yes. I’d have to tell her and mamma; but I need n’t do it quite yet; not till we’d hunted a little longer.

“Then she kissed me as if she loved me after all, on both cheeks; and I sat down and read ‘Wonders of the Deep,’ and cried.

“I remember how homely Lena looked to me when I met her in the hall, and how I despised her. I could n’t eat much supper, and I did n’t drink a drop of water, because I’d been reading ‘Wonders of the

Deep.' Now, water is all full of little live things. I never used to know it, you see. I used to swallow 'em, and not think.

"But no matter for the insects now. I was talking about despising Lena ; but you don't know yet whether she was bad or not, grandma. I'm telling it by degrees, to make it sound like a story.

"Now we will go back to Lijar. Something queer happened next morning. He did n't come to fix the fire till it all went out, and then a new man came. Lijar did n't come at all. Miss Pike asked where he was, and the new man said, 'In the lock-up.' He said he had been put in the lock-up for stealing. Miss Pike thought it was very strange and could n't believe it, because she always liked Lijar. 'What did he steal?' she asked. And the new man said, 'A gold watch and chain.'

“‘Then he stole those rings,’ said I, as quick as a flash. Miss Pike could n’t hush me. I spoke right out before the fireman, and told how Lijar took things off the mantel, and looked at them with his dirty fingers when I was asleep.

“I said I was so sorry *now* to think I’d s’pected Lena, for I *knew* Lena was a good girl, and ’t was Lijar that stole all the time.

“‘Do please write a note to the President,’ said I, ‘and ask him to make Lijar give back those beautiful rings.’

“But Miss Pike never stirred. She said, ‘Little Mary, you don’t know any more about Lijar to-day than you knew about Lena yesterday. You’re hasty again.’ ‘I don’t think I’m hasty, at all,’ said I. ‘Lijar is a horrid thief, or what did they put him in the lock-up for? If he’d steal a big watch, would n’t he steal little rings? If

he'd steal one thing would n't he steal everything?' said I. 'And *I* think the President ought to know it.'

"But Miss Pike did n't pay the least attention, only laughed. You know she has such good judgment, and Doctor Papa says so himself. I was glad afterward that she did n't write to the President, for mother said it was n't the President's business to go to the lock-up, and I suppose a letter would only have bothered him. Besides, if he *had* gone, —well, just you be patient, grandma!

"Miss Pike curled my hair, and I went down to breakfast with the children; I was n't to say anything to Cora, —not yet. Miss Pike was going to hunt again.

"I thought she was a very queer woman to keep hunting, when she *knew* it was no use. I came back after breakfast feeling very bad, for it seemed as if Cora had been looking at

my hands all the while I was eating. I opened the door of our room, and what do you think? There stood Miss Pike, smiling, and she had both those rings on a knitting-needle, holding them up for me to see.

“‘Look at your runaway rings,’ said she. I screamed right out, I was so happy.

“It was n’t Lijar, and it was n’t Lena.

“Miss Pike had found them in that room, and you can’t guess where.

“She had hunted in that bureau five hundred and sixty times, and taken the things all out. But this time she took out one of the drawers, and sat down on the floor to look it over. It was the next to the upper drawer that she took out, and she happened to look up at the empty place in the bureau where the drawer belonged, and there she saw something shining through a crack. It was those rings, both of them. They had got

pushed into the crack and stuck there,— stuck on a splinter.

“Miss Pike said of course I had put them in the upper drawer, instead of the box. It was because I was so sleepy. I don’t see how she ever found them, though, and she don’t see ; for they were sticking to that splinter very tight, and might have stuck there for years and years, if she had n’t happened to sit on the floor and look up, and catch them shining.

“Oh, grandma, I tell you there was n’t a feeling in me that was n’t happy ! I went right into Mrs. Garland’s room, and laughed right out before I could speak.

“‘Here they are, Cora, your runaway rings,’ said I. She did n’t know what I meant till I told her how terribly they ’d been lost. And I said I’d never borrow them any more. I did n’t want to be an expensive

girl, and my papa such a poor doctor. And Mrs. Garland laughed and said, 'That is right,' only she thought my father wasn't such a *very* poor doctor.

"I wished Mrs. Garland had said Kittyleen should stop borrowing, too. For Kittyleen — oh, well, I try to be patient with little Kittyleen !

"I met Lena coming out of our room, smiling the pleasantest smile.

" 'I did been to your room, Miss Mary,' said she. She did n't tell about bringing a bunch of violets, but that was what she brought. She called them 'vi'lets,' when she gave them to Miss Pike to put in water for me. Why, it made me feel so cruel and unkind and ashamed to smell those 'vi'lets.' She bought them herself, Lena did. Oh, she never knew what I'd said about her stealing those rings for her little sister !

“There, that’s pretty near the end. Oh, no, I forgot about Lijar. He had n’t stolen a watch, or touched one. He had n’t stolen anything. And he had n’t been put in the lock-up, either. Perhaps somebody had been put in the lock-up, but it was n’t Lijar. Lijar had broken his leg, and that was all that ailed *him*.

“Miss Pike went to his house to see him, and I went with her. It was a queer old house full of children,—oh, ever so many children. Lijar was in awful pain, so Miss Pike said, but he did n’t groan any, and of course he could n’t possibly look pale, so you would n’t have known how much he was in pain.

“He thanked us for the oranges, and his wife said he was always good and kind, and then she put her apron to her eyes and cried, and told Miss Pike she’d rather be hurt her-

self than to have her 'old man' hurt. Then I felt cruel and unkind again, to think how I'd called him horrid, when he was n't horrid at all, and it was another man that stole.

"There, grandma, I would n't tell this story to anybody but you. But it's the very last time I'll talk so about people, unless I know it's certainly true. If Miss Pike *didn't* say, 'I hope this will be a lesson to you, little Mary,' it will be a lesson all the same, I just about know.

"And now, grandma, if you can spare me, I must go out and talk with mamma and Miss Pike about Ethel's party. Yes'm, it will be Ethel's birthday to-morrow, the 20th of March, and ever since we got home she has been wanting a party. Mamma was n't going to let her have one. She said it would be too much trouble, for her friends are such little bits of things that their

mammas would have to come, too, to keep them in order ; and then *I* said, ‘Oh, mamma, if you are willing, you could let me ask *my* little girls to a party, the little girls of *my* age ! Ethel likes them just as well as *her* little girls, and she ’d be ever so pleased ; and she does want a party so much !’

“Mamma thought it was a queer idea, but I ’m pretty sure she ’ll consent. It is n’t for *my* sake, you know, it ’s for Ethel, and we can call it Ethel’s kettledrum.”

CHAPTER XIII.

ETHEL'S KETTLEDRUM.

Not long after this, "homely Miss Pike" sat by the window in the back parlor, drawing her thread in and out, in and out, of a piece of pretty pink silk. Little Kittyleen, who had returned from Washington, and as usual spent most of her time at Dr. Gray's, had been lying on the rug, gazing up wonderingly at Miss Pike's large, wide mouth.

At last she broke forth suddenly, as if thinking aloud, —

"Most everybody has whiskers, *don't* they, Miss Pike?"

"Why, have *I* any whiskers, Kittyleen?"

"No 'm ; but you've got some growing."

Miss Pike laughed softly to herself. She had always known she was very plain, and of course she was aware of the rather thick, dark beard on her upper lip. Kittyleen's little speech amused her, and yet the tears sprang to her eyes.

"If I had had my way about it," thought she, "I should have had a form like this perfect wax doll I am dressing, and very much such a pink and white face, with wavy, soft hair, the color of old gold ; sweet, red lips, straight nose, not a spot or a freckle anywhere. Then the whole world would have admired me, and I fancy it might be pleasant to be admired.

"Ah, but the One who made me knew what is best ! If I can't be beautiful, I can try to be good ; and I'm not going to cry about my homely body, for I'm sure to leave

it behind me one of these days when I'm called up to Heaven."

Then with a happy smile the excellent young lady took the tape-measure out of her work-basket and measured the slender, round waist of "little miss," as she called the doll.

"Oh, Miss Pike, where did you get that? She's larger than my Princess Aurora Arozarena, and I do believe she's handsomer," cried Flaxie, rushing in from the kitchen, where she had been stoning raisins. "Ethel told me you were dressing an elegant doll, and I could n't wait another minute to see it."

"Well, I'm glad you think she's handsome," replied Miss Pike, trimming the silk basque carefully. "I think myself she's almost a perfect beauty. I fell in love with her last winter when we were in Washing-

ton, and bought her instead of buying myself a new bonnet."

"Why, Miss Pike, how funny! I didn't know young ladies ever wanted dolls. Though why not?" she thought next minute. Could anybody in the whole world be so "grown up" as not to love that exquisite "little miss," who sat up in Miss Pike's lap with the most knowing of smiles, as if she were just going to speak?

"Oh, yes, young ladies love dolls," said Miss Pike, embracing the waxen image tenderly, as she fitted on the pink basque. "But I think I shall give up mine. In fact, I did not intend her for myself. I thought I would buy her and give her to some poor little girl, who never knew what it was to have a good time. And now I'm hurrying to get her dressed in season for Ethel's party. Don't you think she'll look well

there? And of course there'll be some poor little girl among your guests, or perhaps a sick little girl; and I'll give *her* the doll."

"Oh, is that it?" said Flaxie, more surprised than ever. She had not issued invitations yet for her party, — or Ethel's party, — and Miss Pike's words set her to thinking.

Why, there were no poor little girls or any sick ones who ever went to parties! The children she played with were all well and happy. They had pleasant homes — not quite as pleasant as Flaxie's — and plenty to eat and wear. But of course there were other children in town.

"Let me think. Oh, there's Sadie Stockwell. *She* is a poor girl."

Sadie was not exactly sick, but she was lame. Something dreadful had happened to her when she was a baby, and her head

seemed to be driven down between her shoulders, as if she had no neck. She made you think of a flower growing on a leaf-stalk without any stem. Her face was sweet, but sad and pale. She was shorter than most little girls of her age, and walked slowly and painfully with a pair of crutches. Sadie was a good little girl. Why was n't she ever invited to parties? Flaxie did not know why, only "somehow she never was." She lived ever so far away from the other girls; perhaps that was one reason.

Brother Preston was in the shed with Rover, cracking walnuts for to-morrow's candy. Sister Julia was in the kitchen, finishing the raisins Flaxie had been stoning for cake; and Dora Whalen stood by the ironing-table, ironing the finest and best damask table-cloth for Ethel's party, though the table-cloth might have been as coarse as

the pony's red blanket and it would have been all the same to the baby.

Flaxie walked about from room to room in deep thought. Finally, she paused at the open door of her mother's chamber, and looked in. On the floor beside Mrs. Gray stood a basket piled with very small dolls, which she was dressing with strips of bright ribbon, and bows of narrow taste. One of these tiny dolls was to be placed under each guest's plate, and carried home as a memento of Ethel's first party.

"Mamma," asked Flaxie, still in a brown study, "how many dollies did you buy, and how many girls am I going to invite?"

"Well, Mary, here are twenty dollies. I thought you and Ethel would each want one, and I meant you should ask eighteen little girls."

"Could I ask one more, mamma?"

"Eighteen is a large number, Mary; is n't it enough? Oh, do you want little Kittyleen?"

"Kittyleen, mamma? Why, no, indeed! She'd spoil everything. I don't want Kittyleen! I mean Ethel would n't want her; it's Ethel's kettledrum, of course."

Flaxie was careful to say repeatedly, "It is Ethel's kettledrum," lest she should forget it was not her own.

"Well, dear, who is the 'one more,' if not Kittyleen?"

Flaxie did not answer directly.

"Mamma," said she, "what do you suppose Miss Pike said? She said *of course* I'd have some poor girls and sick girls. Must I, mamma?"

Mrs. Gray felt a sudden pricking of conscience. Why had n't she thought of that herself?

"Poor girls, Mary? Sick girls? Why, *of course*, as Miss Pike says, they are the very ones to enjoy your party, my daughter."

"Then, mamma, please buy another dolly, and I'll ask Sadie Stockwell. She won't take up a great deal of room. She never goes anywhere except to school, and never has any good times. I don't know what we could do with her, though," added Flaxie, with a puzzled look, "and I'm afraid the other girls won't like it, for she can't play."

"But the girls *must* like it, my daughter. You have all done wrong not to invite her to your parties long ago, for she is an excellent child, and never rough or ill-mannered. As for entertaining her, you and Julia can talk to her and show her your playthings and picture-books, can't you? I'm sure, Mary, you'll all be happier if you have Sadie."

"So I think, too," cried Flaxie, and

skipped away joyfully, her light curls flying as she ran.

Sober little Sadie, who lived with eight brothers and sisters in an old, worn-out house, dressed in old, worn-out clothes, and looked old and worn-out herself, — how her solemn little face brightened at the unexpected honor of an invitation to Flaxie's — no, *Ethel's* — party! Mrs. Stockwell, too, was very much gratified, especially as Mrs. Gray had sent Sadie one of Flaxie's dresses, a pretty blue cambric, which could be altered over to fit her, as well as anything ever could fit her poor, crooked little figure.

Happy Sadie! She rode next day with Preston Gray in the little basket phaeton, after Blackdrop, the pony, and she felt like rubbing her eyes to make sure she was awake. She smiled beamingly at the cunning little steed and his silver-mounted har-

ness, and at Rover, trotting now here and now there. She smiled at her crutches, which lay across the floor of the phaeton; she smiled at the very mud-puddles which winked back at her sleepily from the side of the road. If there had been any grass, she would have thought it was emeralds; if there had been ice, she would have thought it was diamonds.

When Preston lifted her from the phaeton at his father's gate, and Mrs. Gray and Flaxie both came out to meet her, followed by Kittyleen, who was there, of course, she hobbled up the path with a sparkle of joy and expectation in her sad brown eyes.

The people of Laurel Grove had always been kind to her, and given her mother plenty of half-worn garments to "make over" for all the family; but there are things that poor children prize even more than old

clothes, and nothing had ever seemed quite so desirable to poor, lame Sadie as a little girls' tea-party.

This was chiefly because parties were unknown joys. She had dreamed of them, but never seen them. How the little guests amused themselves, and what they had to eat, it would be worth a great deal to know. Still, until to-day she had as little expectation of ever going to a party, as of mounting an owl's back and flying up to the moon.

Yet here she was. What a beautiful house! What lovely pictures and books and playthings and flowers! How very happy the people must be who lived here all the time!

It is true she was a little frightened at first, being a sensitive child, and not really sure whether the party had begun or not. The little girls kept arriving, one after another, and they were all extremely kind; but no-

body thought to tell her the precise moment when the party would begin.

By and by, however, Miss Pike, who seemed in gay spirits, sprang up and said, —

“Let’s all play ‘Button, Button,’ and immediately bashful little Sadie felt quite at home. Who would have thought of *such* a game at an elegant party? And Miss Pike had n’t gone half around with the button before she let it fall, softly and slyly, into Sadie’s own hand.

This was another surprise.

Then, when the company were playing blind-man’s-buff, Miss Pike took Sadie into a corner and began a long story, with Ethel in her lap and Kittyleen by her side. Sadie listened in rapture. No matter for the blind-man’s-buff; *she* did n’t wish to play. No matter for the “Magical Music,” the “I Spy,” the “Marching on to Old Quebec.”

Miss Pike's stories were better than all the games in the world.

Besides, Flaxie and her friends never seemed to forget Sadie, but kept coming up between the pauses to say something pleasant. They all agreed among themselves that it was the nicest party they had ever attended, and Kittyleen did n't spoil it; and they said this to Flaxie.

"Oh," said Flaxie, delighted, "then it's Miss Pike that makes it so nice."

But she was mistaken. It was Sadie, though nobody suspected it. They were all trying to give the lame girl pleasure, and we never make others happy without feeling happy ourselves.

But the best was to come. Supper was served, and all the girls were summoned to the dining-room to a feast such as *one* of the party had never seen before. Sandwiches,

cakes, tarts, pyramids of candy, glasses of whipped cream ; but what *was* that in the middle of the table ? A little "Lady Bountiful" in a small chair. She was as large as a child two years old, but no baby of that age ever had such long, fair ringlets, such starry eyes, such rosy cheeks, such a sweet-smiling mouth, made up for endless kisses.

Her pink silk dress was trimmed with rich lace, and bore a sweeping train. You could just see in front the points of her tiny pink boots ; and as for her gloves, they were long tan-colored kids, — the height of fashion, — and buttoned from wrist to elbow.

Just before this marvel of beauty stood a small light-stand, bearing a birthday cake on a silver tray ; and the beauty was pointing sweetly with both hands at the cake, which was a very large one, heavily frosted, and marked in letters of cedar, "Ethel." But no

one thought of the cake for looking at "little miss." She was so wondrously bewitching, so "alive looking" that they all exclaimed in chorus, "Oh, what a beauty!" They wanted to rush upon her and embrace her; but being far too well-bred for that, they took their seats in perfect order, only murmuring over and over again to one another, —

"Oh, isn't she just too sweet for anything?" All but Flaxie Frizzle's Kittyleen, who smothered Flaxie with kisses, and teased her with questions. Was it Ethel's doll? Who gave it to her? Was *that* her kettledrum?

Presently Mrs. Gray cut the birthday cake; and while she was passing it, that roguish Miss Pike stole up behind Ethel, and set a beautiful wreath of flowers upon her head. Everybody laughed as the little one suddenly dropped her cake to the floor, and cried "Oh!"

But it was not till the close of supper that a single word was said about the doll.

Then Mrs. Gray remarked, —

“Suppose we pass her round and look at her? But here is a piece of paper pinned to her dress. We will read it first, and see what it says.”

She unpinned the paper and read aloud, —

“I wish to be given to a sick little girl or a lame girl.”

It was half a minute before anybody could take the sense of this. What, was n't it Ethel's doll, after all? Then they understood it, and all cried out, “Oh, Sadie! Sadie! Sadie!”

The poor bewildered child turned very pale. This was too much happiness for her. She was n't used to anything like this. She rose to her feet, caught up her crutches, — though where she wanted to go she did

not know,—dropped them, and fell down crying.

But she was crying for joy. It was n't possible, no, surely it *was n't* possible that this loveliest of all presents was intended for her.

And there was Miss Pike. She stood holding the doll's trunk in her hand, full of the dainty underclothing and every-day dresses and outside wraps that she had been making for weeks. But when she saw Sadie crying I must confess she cried, too, though she was intending to laugh. But you know laughter and tears lie very near together. And, indeed, it was very touching to everybody when Sadie sobbed out, not knowing any one heard her, —

“*My dolly!* Oh, I never 'spected to have such a good time as *this*, not till I went to Heaven!”

Thus ended Ethel's first party. And everybody said it was a great success. "But where was the kettledrum? I kept looking and looking, and I didn't see it," mourned Flaxie Frizzle's Kittyleen.

THE END.

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